

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL DESCRIPTION IN IDENTIFYING ARMED ROBBERY
SUSPECTS**

by

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I hereby declare that the significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects is my own work and that all the sources that I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

.....

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First and foremost, I would like to thank our Almighty God for having carried me through this entire programme and for the wisdom He has given me towards the completion of this mini dissertation.

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All the participants in this research study, your knowledge and expertise in the field of this research paper was of great assistance, your input has helped me achieve the outcome of this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

The research attempts to review the significance of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases in the Paarl policing cluster and to explore the value of identifying armed robbery suspects. The purposes of conducting this research were to evaluate the existing procedures that investigators use regarding personal description of armed robbery suspects with the intention of determining its strengths and weaknesses as well as by looking at how this procedure can be improved.

Also, this research explored how investigators utilised the personal description as a technique in identifying the armed robbery suspects internationally, thereby establishing the best practices. Moreover, to recommend new procedures in obtaining a personal description of armed robbery suspects. Furthermore, to empower the South African investigators and other investigators in terms of how personal description can be recorded accurately in the case dockets and be effectively used in tracing the suspects of armed robbery cases.

LIST OF ACRONYMS & DESCRIPTIONS

Assault GBH	:	Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm
CAS	:	Crime Administration System
CSC	:	Community Service Centre
CV	:	Curriculum Vitae
DNA	:	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
etc.	:	Et cetera
FSL	:	Forensic Science Laboratory
i.e.	:	That is
LCRC	:	Local Criminal Record Centre
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPIS	:	National Picture & Image System
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
SAPS	:	South African Police Service
UNISA	:	University of South Africa

KEY TERMS

Personal description; robbery; identification; show-ups and identification parades.

SUMMARY

This research examines the significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects. Personal description is a very crucial technique in the investigation of armed robbery cases. Suspects often use balaclavas or hand gloves, but notwithstanding that witnesses, complainants and victims can still make an invaluable contribution towards the identity of the suspect.

The results and recommendations of this research will be placed in different libraries with the intention of making it accessible to those who are involved in training of investigators as well as the investigators themselves.

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The aforementioned sources include reports and official registers relating to the topic, the Constitution, Policies, etc. The secondary sources include local newspapers; pamphlets; various textbooks on topic, etc. If the recommendations made in this research are applied by the South African Police Service (SAPS), and other investigating agencies, it would change the manner in which this technique has been used or unused during the investigation of armed robbery cases.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Francina Swartz and our children who have been my inspiration and driving force throughout my studies since 2013. I could not have completed this dissertation if it was not for my family who encouraged me to continue and complete this dissertation under extremely difficult circumstances.

CERTIFICATE BY EDITOR

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23 March 2018

Dear Abel Swartz

This letter is to record that I, Naideen Foxcroft, completed a copy edit of your Master's Dissertation titled 'The significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects' by Abel Swartz.

This edit included the following:

- Spelling
- Tenses
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Pronoun matches
- Word usage
- Sentence structure
- Table numbers and layout
- Content (limited)

This edit also included the layout/formatting of this dissertation in as far as possible.

The edit excluded the following:

- Correctness or truth of information (unless obvious)
- Correctness/spelling of specific technical terms and words (unless obvious)
- Correctness/spelling of unfamiliar names and proper nouns (unless obvious)



Naideen Foxcroft

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Criminal investigation revolves around the search for things and people, to reconstruct circumstances of an illegal act and to determine the guilty party (Sefanyetso 2009:46). Ngwenya (2012:44) states that successful crime investigation, therefore, does not only mean the identification of the offender, but also the tracing of the offender. Ngwenya (2012:44) continues to submit that all investigators must be familiar with the objectives of the investigation process as to enable investigators to conduct successful and effective investigations.

According to Van Der Merwe (2008:15), the criminal investigator has a big role to fulfil in this endeavour, as he or she is responsible for the obtaining of information and evidence as well as for preparing the case for the prosecutor, who presents it during the trial. Solving a crime is based on the collection of various forms of information. In this regard, Gilbert (2004:442) states that “tracing information refers to all other information that may be indicative of the personal identity of an individual”. According to Van der Merwe (2008:57), information is the lifeblood of police work, without which a police investigation can very quickly come to a complete standstill.

SAPS Annual Report (2010/2011:1) states that during the 2010/2011 financial year, a total of 2071487 (approximately 2, 1 million) serious offences were registered in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) compared to the 2121887 cases registered during the 2009/2010 financial year. This means that the total number of serious crimes reduced by 2, 4% or 50400 cases (SAPS 2010/2011:1). Armed robberies are classified as a contact crime (SAPS Annual Report, 2017/2018:12). Contact crime involves physical contact between the perpetrators and the victims, and is normally accompanied by violence. Contact crime basically consists of violence against a person irrespective of the nature of such violence.

It includes the following categories of offences: Murder, attempted murder, assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm (Assault GBH), common assault, sexual offences, aggravated robbery and common robbery.

A foundation was set for the creation of nexus between armed robbery cases and the witnesses' abilities to identify the suspects. This chapter focus on what the research problem is, research aims, purpose of the research, research questions, key theoretical concepts, target population, sampling, data collection, research approach and design as well as aspects of research relating to data.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Robbery has become one of the most feared crimes in the world. The perpetrators of robbery are viewed as some of the most feared and hated of all street criminals. Due to the intimate nature of robbery, victims are engaged face to face with their assailants. The property and personal safety of victims are substantially threatened and as such are immediately placed in a crisis situation (Van der Merwe, 2008:140). A crime statistics' report for the 2010/2011 financial year, released by the Minister for Safety and Security, indicated that the Western Cape recorded the second highest ratio of aggravated robberies. According to the same report, 101463 armed robberies were reported for 2010/2011 (SAPS, Crime Statistic Report, 2010/2011: np).

During the same financial year, 25077 arrests have been effected for aggravated robbery and only 24, 7% suspects were charged for these cases. The researcher noticed that investigators do not obtain adequate information about the description of suspects in armed robbery cases. This came to the fore when preliminary research was conducted to analyse the information contained in the dockets of armed robbery cases opened between 2009 and 2011 in the Mbekweni policing area in the Western Cape. In most of the dockets, the only sentence which became apparent was that the deponents declared that they will be able to identify the suspects should they come across them.

This statement was never accompanied by any information providing the exact description of the suspects, this amid the well-known fact that it is better to obtain such information whilst it is still fresh in the minds of the reporters. The researcher experienced that the witnesses are not always willing to co-operate with the investigating officials. Sefanyetso (2009:2) states that investigators do not use correct investigative measures to trace and identify suspects, as some could not even tell what methods they use to identify offenders.

Van der Merwe (2008:1) is of the opinion that “it seems that investigators are unable to submit sufficient evidence for successful prosecution”.

The describing of a suspect by a witness before an arrest is effected is very important. Therefore, witness identification is inevitable in any kind of criminal investigation. In this regard, Newburn, Williams and Wright (2007:303) state that witness identification has to do with the investigator obtaining information about the suspect and the role he or she played in the commission of the crime. The problem of not gathering sufficient information about the personal description of suspects adversely affects the investigation of armed robberies. One of the results for such an omission is that suspected armed robbers are not identified and consequently not apprehended.

They still remain untraced even after they have committed a myriad of offences, which inevitably leads to a repetition of the same offences. This culminates in a situation where the victims are dissatisfied with the investigation of their cases, thereby losing confidence in the SAPS in general. In addition to this, those suspects who are apprehended may escape prosecution or win the cases because the case dockets may not necessarily contain information regarding the suspects' personal descriptions.

This state of affairs could be blamed for the low conviction rate in cases of armed robberies. If armed robbery investigators start asking more general questions about the armed robbers, the identification process will improve and will ultimately also lead to the tracing of suspects. According to Buckles (2007:206), in questioning a witness for testimonial evidence, the first goal is to determine what the witness saw or heard, what the witness remembered, and what specifically the witness can testify to.

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

According to Flick (2011:89), a research aim is the anticipation to create new knowledge and theories. Birks (2014:221) states that the aim of empirical research is to collect new data and to determine whether there are interesting trends or patterns in the collected data that will help to establish the facts. The aim of this study is to analyse the significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects.

While the aims of the research are general statements, the objectives are clear statements of intended outcomes, all of which can be measured in some way (Gray, 2014:53). For the purpose of this study, the research objectives give an outline of what the researcher wants to achieve at the end of the study. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To review the significance of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases in the Paarl policing cluster.
- To explore the value of identifying armed robbery suspects.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011: 18) state that a research question provides the structure for literature review and is a crucial aspect that points the way for the research investigation. A well thought out research question should indicate the end result of what one may expect at the conclusion of the research and gives an understanding of why the research was conducted (Dantzker & Hunter, 2012:40). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013:54), good research begins with identifying a good question to ask, ideally a question that no one else has ever thought to ask before. Mouton (2006:53) states that a research problem implicitly or explicitly embodies a research question, such as — what are the causes of crime? Which factors in society are conducive to criminal behaviour?

The research questions for this research are as follows:

- What is personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases?
- What is significant about personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects?

1.5 PURPOSES OF THE RESEARCH

According to Oates (2009:16), the reasons for conducting research are to add to the body of knowledge about a particular topic; to solve a problem; to find out what happens; to find the evidence to inform practice; to develop a greater understanding of people and their world; to predict, plan and control; to contribute to other people's wellbeing; to contribute to personal needs; to test or disprove a theory; to come up with a better way to do something; to understand another person's point of view; or to create more interest in the research.

According to Creswell (2009: 111-112), a research purpose is the reason why the researcher conducts the research. The research has more than one purpose:

- i. *Evaluation*: The researcher evaluated the existing procedures that investigators use regarding the personal description of armed robbery suspects, with the intention of determining its strengths and weaknesses as well as by looking at how this procedure can be improved.
- ii. *Exploration*: It was envisaged that this research explored on how investigators utilised the personal description as a technique in identifying the armed robbery suspects internationally thereby establishing the best practices. Specific questions based on the personal description of the suspects were asked to the investigators.
- iii. *Application*: It is anticipated that this research recommended new procedures to obtain a personal description of armed robbery suspects. It was also intended that if the recommendations made in this research are applied by the South African Police Service (SAPS) and other investigating agencies, it changed the manner in which this technique has been used or unused during the investigation of armed robbery cases. A technique is a method used to execute an activity or a specific task.
- iv. *Empower*: The purpose of this research is to empower the South African Police Service investigators and other investigators in terms of how personal description can be recorded accurately in the case dockets and be effectively used in tracing the suspects of armed robbery cases. The results and recommendations of this research will be placed at different libraries with the intention of making it accessible to those who are involved in training of investigators as well as the investigators themselves.

1.6 KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

According to Babbie and Mouton (2012:111), prior to conducting research, the operational concepts that are contained in the problem statement must be defined. This will assist the evaluator to determine whether the researcher has carried out what was proposed in the problem statement. The following concepts were used frequently in this research and were defined as follows:

1.6.1 Crime

A crime is an act that violates the law of which there is a prescribed punishment (Buckles 2007:2). Crime can also be explained as any form of conduct for which there is a prescribed punishment by the state.

1.6.2 Forensic Investigation

Forensic investigation is usually associated with the investigation of computer related crimes, which also include corruption, fraud, embezzlement and other white collar crimes (Van Rooyen 2008:14). Forensic investigation is a step-by-step inquiry or observation, careful examination and recording of evidence, and establishing of facts and using science in order to present evidence before the court (Sefanyetso 2009:79).

1.6.3 Personal description

Personal description concerns the description of the alleged offender by the victim, complainant or eye-witness who observed the crime being committed (Sefanyetso 2009:80). For the purpose of this study, personal description can also be an explanation of the physical features of the suspect by the victim, witness or complainant or any other person with the intention of tracing and arresting such a suspect.

1.6.4 Robbery

According to Snyman (2008:517), robbery consists of theft of property by unlawfully and intentionally using violence to take the property from somebody else or threats of violence to induce the possessor of the property to submit to the taking of property. Burchell (2006:817) defines robbery as consisting in the theft of property by intentionally using violence or threats of violence to induce submission to the taking of it from another.

1.6.5 Suspect

According to Ngwenya (2012:80), "a suspect can be regarded as a person being involved in a commission of a crime."

1.6.6 Identification

According to Ogle (2004:9), identification is the collective aspect of the set characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognisable or known.

According to Sefanyetso (2009:78-79), identification can also be described as an analytical and classification process by which an entity is placed in a predefined, limited or restricted class. Identification can also be explained as the recognition of suspects by means of various investigation techniques to the disposal of the investigating officials.

1.6.7 Crime scene

According to Houck and Siegel (2006:28), the scene of the crime is the centre of the forensic world where everything starts and is the foundation upon which all subsequent analysis is based. The crime scene is the place pointed out by the witness or complainant where the crime was committed.

1.6.8 Criminal investigation

According to Orthman and Hess (2013:8), a criminal investigation is the process of discovering, collecting, preparing, identifying and presenting evidence to determine what happened and who is responsible. Criminal investigation is the investigation of a reported crime by interviewing the complainant, obtaining witness statements, if there are any witnesses, and to collect all evidence.

1.6.9 Evidence

According to Durston (2011:1), evidence is material adduced at the trial to establish disputed facts. Evidence can be described as all of the exhibits found, identified and collected on the crime scene.

1.6.10 Investigator

According to Stich (2006:140), an investigator is any individual authorised by a department or agency to conduct or engage in investigations or prosecutions of violations of criminal laws.

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The researcher conducted a qualitative research approach and personally collected data by means of interviewing armed robbery investigators in the Paarl policing cluster.

According to Dawson (2009: 14-15), qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviours and experiences through methods such as interviews or focus group attempts to obtain an in-depth opinion from participants. Also, Creswell (2009:4) is of the opinion that qualitative research deals with exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals to a social or human problem and involves asking questions, collecting and analysing data and making interpretations of the meaning thereof.

Empirical research was conducted in this study. Empirical research is a way of gaining knowledge by means of direct and indirect observation or experience. Empirical means something that has been found out from experience, from trial and error or from the evidence of your senses (Thomas, 2013:22). This research was based on the knowledge and skills that the participants acquired over time.

1.7.1 Advantages of qualitative research

Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study selected issues in-depth and in detail as they identify and attempt to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2006:47). According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014:11), qualitative research brings about a socially constructed nature of reality and intimacy between the researcher and what is studied.

1.7.2 Disadvantages of qualitative research

Cresswell (2009:40), states that qualitative research requires a strong commitment to study a problem and demands time and resources. In qualitative research, researchers do not always show contextual sensitivity (Silverman, 2011:18).

1.7.3 Research Design

According to Maree (2012:70), a research design is a plan or strategy that includes the underlying philosophical assumptions, specific selection of participants, data collection and data analysis techniques that will be used. According to David and Sutton (2011:204), the purpose of the research design is to provide a framework for the collection and analysis of the data.

According to the same authors, it also provides the framework upon which the research is conducted, and enables the researcher to gather evidence that will allow the research question to be addressed. An interview schedule was compiled and interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences. A structured interview containing both open and closed ended questions was put to the interviewees. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:561), open-ended questions are questions that do not provide participants with a predetermined set of responses, but allow participants to formulate responses using their own ideas and words.

According to the same authors (2009), closed questions are questions that do not allow the participant to provide answers in his or her own words, but force the participant to select one or more choices from a fixed list of answers provided. The researcher also scrutinised some armed robbery dockets to establish whether the suspects were arrested by means of a personal description.

1.8 TARGET POPULATION AND DEMARCATION

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2009:262), a research population" refers to the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. Strydom (2011:222) states that a population is a term that sets boundaries on the study unit, referring to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. They further state that a population is the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned. The target population consisted of investigating officials posted at four police stations in the Western Cape, namely Paarl, Paarl East, Mbekweni and Wellington. These police stations are situated in the Paarl policing cluster in the Western Cape.

These stations were selected from a target of six stations in the Paarl policing cluster, namely Philadelphia, Paarl, Wellington, Paarl East, Mbekweni and Malmesbury through a simple random sampling. The researcher wrote the names of all six stations on paper and cut them into separate pieces of papers. These were put in a hat and the researcher blindly chose four pieces. The researcher interviewed 12 participants. Three participants at each of the four stations were chosen.

Table 1: SAPS members from Detective Branches

Participants numbers	Gender	Age	Current position	Years' experience	Police Station
One	Female	37	Sergeant	14	Mbekweni
Two	Male	42	Sergeant	19	Mbekweni
Three	Male	53	Warrant officer	29	Phillidelphia
Four	Female	34	Sergeant	17	Philidelphia
Five	Male	38	Warrant officer	21	Paarl
Six	Male	51	Captain	34	Paarl
Seven	Male	52	Luitenant colonel	35	Malmesbury
Eight	Male	47	Captain	29	Malmesbury
Nine	Female	34	Sergeant	15	Paarl-East
Ten	Male	39	Warrant officer	22	Paarl -East
Eleven	Male	52	Captain	32	Wellington
Twelve	Male	33	Constable	12	Wellington

The researcher decided on the Paarl policing cluster because it was more cost-effective for him to conduct the research in that area. These stations are similar in terms of certain characteristics, such as the high levels of armed robbery; hence they are part of what is known as the 'robbery investigation forum'. The robbery investigation forum is a forum where all the weekly armed robbery cases in terms of modus operandi, motive, linkages and descriptions of suspects are discussed. The said forum consists of the branch commanders of Malmesbury, Mbekweni, Paarl, Paarl East, Philadelphia and Wellington. The forum has a meeting every Thursday at 12:00 at the Paarl East police station.

The forum meeting is chaired by the cluster commander of the Paarl policing cluster.

During these forum meetings, new reported armed robbery cases are discussed with the aim of establishing whether the same armed robbers are committing these crimes in the entire cluster. Also, progress concerning the 'old' armed robbery cases is given to the cluster commander who in return gives the branch commanders new tasks in order to identify and trace the armed robbers. Each station has informal settlements with spaza shops owned by foreigners. Spaza shops are those shops built out of sink or containers from which small quantities of food, fruit, vegetables and sweets are sold in order to make a small profit. It is a South African slang for a small shop in a township (Collins English Dictionary, 2018:np). These spaza shops are actually the targets of armed robbers within these policing areas. The armed robbers hide in these informal settlements.

1.8.1 Delimitation of the study

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011:77), the purpose of the research limitations is to remind the reader that the study is bounded and situated in a specific context. Leedy and Ormrod (2013:58), state that: "what the researcher is not going to do is stated in the delimitations". The following delimitations are applicable to this study:

- Topic delimitation – This study is limited to the offence of armed robbery in the Paarl policing cluster, Cape Town in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.
- Geographic delimitation – This research was only conducted in the Paarl policing cluster. The stations in the above-mentioned cluster are situated not far from each other. It was, therefore, convenient enough to get to the participants at the various police stations in the said cluster. The researcher works and lives in one of the areas situated close to the police station.
- Time delimitation – The literature and data were collected since February 2014 until November 2017.

1.9 SAMPLING

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:49), sampling is the selection of research participants from an entire population and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and social processes to observe.

According to Kumar (2011:193), sampling is the process of selecting a few (a sample) from the bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group. The target population consisted of 12 investigating officers. These investigating officers were selected from a target of 63 investigating officers through a simple random sampling. The researcher wrote the names of all 63 investigating officers on paper and cut this into separate pieces of paper. These were put in a hat and the researcher randomly and blindly selected 12 pieces.

The choice of 12 investigators from a total of 63 was both mathematical and justified by the qualitative nature of this research. The sample was the third of the total number of detectives in the Paarl policing cluster. Due to the content analysis of the interviews, there is sufficient data to base the research conclusions on.

1.10 DATA COLLECTION

According to Beri (2010:11), “data” means “facts and statistics collected together for reference or analyses”. Data collection is the technique used to collect evidence in systematic ways. This includes surveys, interviews, observation, and previously existing data (Ragin & Amorosa 2011:131). Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources, research methods, investigators, and/or theories/perspectives to cross-check and corroborates research data and conclusions (Christensen, Johnson & Turner (2011:530). The researcher made use of interviews and a thorough literature study as the data collection methods in this research.

1.10.1 Literature study

Hofstee (2006:90) emphasises that a literature review should be exhaustive in its coverage of the main aspects of the study treatment of authors. According to Davis, Francis and Jubb (2011:67), it is imperative for you to have a good in-depth understanding of the literature in an area so that you can design your research. According to Wellman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:39), university libraries usually have staff to assist researchers in conducting a computer search for references on relevant research based on a list of key words.

The researcher conducted a search at the regional library at UNISA on certain keywords in the index pages of criminal investigation textbooks, as there were no such books with the same topic, available elsewhere. The researcher conducted a literature search to have a good understanding of the literature in this research area. The researcher consulted all possible national and international sources in the field of criminal investigation and forensic investigation. The researcher also made use of the internet for articles with the same topic or more or less the same topic. There are a number of books available on personal description, but not on the significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects, and this literature material was analysed for the purposes of gathering data in this research. Most of the textbooks are outdated, written more than 10 years ago and were not used during this research.

The researcher also used primary and secondary sources. These sources include:

- Primary sources — Reports and official registers relating to topic, the Constitution, Policies, Acts, etc.
- Secondary sources — Local newspapers, pamphlets, various textbooks on topic, Articles and dissertations, etc.

1.10. 2 Interviews

According to Maree (2012:87), an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions with the purpose of collecting data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, perceptions, opinions, understanding and behaviour of the participants. In addition to this, Hofstee (2006:122) emphasises that the interview is the most frequently used method of data collection, during which a researcher essentially tries to elicit information from a certain group of people who are presumed to have the information the researcher is seeking. The researcher conducted a structured interview. According to Hofstee (2006:135), a fully structured interview is where there is a fixed sequence of predetermined questions.

They can be structured with all interviewees being asked the same questions. These questions can range from open-ended questions to only a few “yes” and “no” questions or the ones called closed-ended questions.

Bouma and Ling (2010: 65-66), state that open-ended questions provide no structure for an answer and are intended to invite a more comprehensive in-depth answer to the question. The researcher asked open-ended questions to get maximum or in-depth information from the research participants. The researcher personally conducted the interviews with the 12 participants in their offices and wrote down all information on the interview schedule. See attached example of the questionnaire (Appendix A).

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011:397), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. According to Peck and Devore (2012:6), the process of data analysis can be regarded as a sequence of steps ranging from planning, data collection to make informed conclusions based on the results of analysed data. The researcher 'broke up' the data by writing down the themes and compared the existing data, which was obtained from text books, with data obtained from the structured interview schedule and docket analysis.

The aim of the analysis is to understand the various constitutive elements of one's data through an inspection of relationships between concepts, constructs or variables and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data (Mouton 2008:108). The researcher made use of the spiral method of data analysis as mentioned by Creswell (2014:197-199). The following steps were applied by the researcher:

- Organisation of details about the case: The researcher organised all the data that was obtained during the interviews with the research participants.
- Data perusal of data: The researcher perused all data to ensure that it is relevant to the questions asked. Irrelevant information given by the research participants was not used.
- Data classification: The researcher put all information that has similar meaning under one sub-heading in order to determine whether there are any other different views or opinions.
- Synthesis and generalisation: The researcher integrated and evaluated all data during the research.

1.12 METHODS TO ENSURE VALIDITY

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:90), validity refers to the degree to which the research conclusions are sound. Validity, is defined as referring to the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make, and based on the data they collect, and also refers to whether or not an experiment explains what it claims to claim (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun 2012:148). The researcher conducted interviews. During the interview process, the same questions from the interview schedule were put to all participants. The questions on the interview schedule were based on the research questions.

The sampling method that was used gave the investigators in the population an equal opportunity to be included in the research. The answers given by each participant were discussed with the same participant to ensure that they were correctly interpreted by the researcher. The literature gathering was selected from subject specific books, criminal investigation books, research books, journal articles and other sources as stated by (Denscombe, 2010:143) to ensure validity. All interpretations, analysis and conclusions were made on the basis of data gathered from the interviews and literature studies.

1.12.1 Credibility

Credibility concerns the extent to which qualitative researchers can demonstrate that their data is accurate and appropriate (Denscombe 2011:299). According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013:236-237), credibility is the alternative in internal validity. The goal with credibility is to demonstrate that the research was conducted in a manner which ensured that the participants were accurately identified and described. The credibility of qualitative research is increased through prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, by triangulating different methods and making use of formalised qualitative methods.

1.12.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised, or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalising (Social Research Methods, 2015:12).

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:258), the theoretical knowledge obtained from the qualitative study can be applied to other similar individuals, groups or situations. If another researcher applies the findings to similar circumstances and use the same qualitative methods, the same results will be obtained.

1.13 METHODS TO ENSURE RELIABILITY

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:92), reliability is the degree to which results are repeatable. Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same results each time (Babbie 2007:143). During the data analysis, the researcher followed the guidelines of Le May (2012:87) which has proven to be reliable in various studies, it was used to adhere to generally accepted scientific standards. The guidelines of Le May (2012:87), are set out as follow:

- Focus on the research question(s);
- Reflect on the data and discuss it with other people to try to rule out bias and formulate their ideas; and
- Aim for rich, thick, detailed accounts of the findings, including appropriate quotations from, for example, participant or observational field notes.

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:299), to provide proper records for analysis, was used when interviews were recorded on paper. An interview schedule was designed as a measuring instrument to record the experience and expertise of investigators in the field of criminal investigation – more specifically the significance of personal description in armed robbery cases. The participants were not forced to answer questions on the interview schedule. The researcher made use of leading questions and did not influence the answers of the participants in any way. The literature that was used in the research was acknowledged throughout the report.

1.13. 1 Dependability

According to Dantzker and Hunter (2012:188), dependability concerns the stability and consistency over a period of time of the research design, data collection methods and instruments to produce consistent results under same circumstances and in the same context.

Participants' responses were written down. The researcher also verified transcripts to ensure they accurately reflected participants responses.

1.13.2 Confirmability

According to Kumar (2011:185), confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. The researcher kept a comprehensive record of the research process followed to ensure that the explanation of the findings, recommendations and conclusions made can be traced to the sources.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Dantzker and Hunter (2012:190) ethics, "doing what is morally and legally right in the conducting of research". Most ethical issues in research fall into one of four categories, namely protection from harm, informed consent, the right to privacy and honesty with professional colleagues. The researcher adhered to the following ethical guidelines during this study as stipulated in Leedy and Ormrod (2014:111). These issues are discussed below:

- *Protection from harm*

Researchers should not expose research participants to undue physical or psychological harm. As a general rule, the risk involved in participating in a study should not be noticeably greater than the normal risk of day-to-day living. The researcher went to the different police stations to conduct the interviews with the participant's respective offices, while they were on duty. The questions were asked from the interview schedule. Participants were assured that the information they provided for this study would be confidential and that their identity would not be made known to anyone.

- *Informed consent*

Research participants should be told the nature of the study to be conducted and given the choice of either participating or not participating. Furthermore, they should be told that, if they agree to participate, they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Any participation should be voluntary. Informed consent of the line managers of the interviewees was obtained prior to the interviewees being interviewed, so as to achieve voluntary participation.

- *The right to privacy*

Any research study should respect the participants' rights to privacy. Under no circumstances should a researcher's dissertation, either oral or written, be presented in such a way that readers become aware of how a particular participant responded or behaved (unless the participant has specifically granted permission, in writing, for this to happen). The researcher informed the participants that all information given would be treated confidentially and that their information would only be used in this research, although the findings would be made public. The participants requested to participate anonymously. A number was allocated to each participant.

- *Honesty with professional colleagues*

The researcher did not add data to support any finding or recommendation. All sources used in this research were acknowledged. Terre Blanche et al. (2006:61) point out: The essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of the research participants. Research ethics, however, involve more than a focus on the welfare of research participants and extend into areas such as scientific misconduct and plagiarism. This was achieved by emphasising those aspects of protecting the identity of participants (anonymity), if so requested by them.

Prior written permission from the SAPS was obtained for undertaking this research project (See attached, Annexure B). The code of ethics at the University of South Africa (UNISA) emphasises the ethical principles that researchers associated with UNISA are expected to adhere to, namely integrity, confidentiality, anonymity, transparency and accountability. All personal information and records that were provided by the participants remained confidential. All the participants were informed that confidentiality and anonymity were safeguarded (UNISA: Policy on Research Ethics 2012:16).

1.15 ORGANISATION OF DISSERTATION

This research report was divided into four chapters, as indicated below, in which the research design was presented, the research questions were discussed and the research findings interpreted.

Chapter 1: General Orientation

This chapter focused on the general information of the study. It started with an introduction, followed by other key aspects such as a problem statement and the research methodology. The latest was sub-divided under various other headings, such as the research approach and design, and data analysis and many more. Each of these aspects were discussed. Also, an indication was given as to how it was applied during the research.

Chapter 2: Personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases

This section will discuss personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases. The following concepts relating to personal description were explored: components of personal description, general information and physical description. Furthermore, personal description techniques, such as mugshots, photographic identification, identification parades, show-ups and some other aspects relating to the heading of the chapter were explored.

Chapter 3: The significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects

This chapter is based on the second research question. It did not only focus on investigative work, but also focused on court proceedings under the sub-headings, such as linking suspects to a court case and improving the chances of conviction of the suspect.

Chapter 4: Findings and Recommendations

This part finalises the research with conclusions and recommendations on the findings. Importantly, these findings are based on the two research objectives of the study. The chapter is concluded with a summary which focuses on the significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION IN THE INVESTIGATION OF ARMED ROBBERY CASES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is of paramount importance to identify, arrest and successfully prosecute armed robbery suspects. Various sources of information, such as the victim, complainant and the witness, play an integral role in giving a personal description of an armed robbery suspect. Palmiotto (2013:38) gives a comprehensive description of a source of information and regards it as any record, custodian of records, directory, publication, public official, or business person, or any other person or object, which might be of assistance to an investigator.

To obtain a personal description of an armed robbery suspect, the investigator should ask specific questions that can assist the source of information to divulge relevant and important information, as in most instances the victim, complainant and witness do not know how to describe a suspect. This view is confirmed by Orthmann and Hess (2013:216) who state that investigators need to help witnesses describe suspects and vehicles by asking specific questions and using an identification diagram. This chapter focuses on the meaning of personal description, and thereafter the components of personal description will be analysed. In addition to that, this chapter also looks at various factors that can influence the reliability of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases.

2.2 PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

Personal description is the description of the suspect's face and clothing that he or she was wearing during the commission of the crime. It is important to know what personal description is all about. If the complainant, victim or witness cannot provide a personal description of the suspect, it will be difficult for the investigating official to trace the armed robbery suspect. It is also very important to know who is responsible for obtaining the personal description of the suspect. The research participants were interviewed with the intention of establishing what the personal description of a suspect means, and the following responses were tendered:

- Eleven participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11&12) defined personal description as the description of a suspect by the complainant, victim and the witness.
- Participant number 7 stated that *“personal description as where an investigating officer gets the full description from the complainant of what the suspect looks like including the face, skin colour, type of clothing and any marks on the body or face of the suspect”*.

The answers of the participants were compared with each other. One of the 12 participants (participant number 7) did not mention the other people who can provide a personal description, such as the victim who may not necessarily be a complainant and the other witnesses. However, this cannot be seen as a sign of ill information, as the very same participant mentioned the crux of personal descriptions, such as the face and skin colour. On the other hand, the 11 participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11&12) mentioned three sources of information such as the witness, complainant and victim. One of the 12 participants gave an example with regard to what the investigating official should obtain from the complainant. The other 11 participants did not provide examples of what the personal description may entail.

Becker (2009:156) states that witnesses and victims provide the first leads of the investigation, which include the descriptions of persons, places, events and things. The submissions of Becker (2009) are supplemented by Sefanyetso (2009:80) who describes the term as “it concerns the description of the alleged offender by the victim, complainant or other eyewitnesses who observed the crime being committed”. Although the majority of literature suggests that the main sources of personal description are victims, witnesses and complainants, there are some of the authors who also include other eyewitnesses who may not necessarily fall within the mentioned sources.

This is important in emphasising that other eyewitnesses are also instrumental in the identification of offenders (Othman & Hess, 2013:216; Osterburg & Ward, 2014:157). However, it should be noted that although there are different sources that can provide information about the suspects’ descriptions, the role of the investigator cannot be under-emphasised.

This is confirmed by Palmiotto (2013:6) who argues that criminal investigators must be familiar with investigative techniques and sources of information. Osterburg and Ward (2014:8) state that identifying the perpetrator is of course the primary goal of a criminal investigation, but the ability to bring a suspect to justice also depends on the evidence necessary for a conviction. In addition to the explanation offered by literature, it is also noteworthy that it is not only the investigator who is responsible for obtaining accurate details about the suspects. According to Palmiotto (2013:4), the patrol officer complements the investigators.

Palmiotto (2013:4) continues to submit that criminal investigations should be considered to be the responsibility of the entire department, and what better way to incorporate the premise than to increase the patrol's responsibility. When comparing the responses of the participants and the literature, there are similarities and differences that can be observed. For instance, literature and the 11 participants (participant's numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11&12) mentioned three sources of information, such as the witness, victim and the complainant. The main difference, however, can be seen, as the participants did not mention the phrase: "... *who observed the crime being committed*".

The said phrase is only mentioned by various authors or literature. However, the participants mentioned the sources of information, which can provide the investigating official with a personal description of the suspect and by implication it may be interpreted that these sources of information include those who were directly or indirectly involved when the said crime was being committed. On the other hand, there is a contrast with participant number 7 who mentioned that "*this information about the suspect should be obtained by the investigators.*" This could be problematic because in practice the description of the suspects can be obtained by the first responder at the scene of the crime, who is normally a uniformed police official or somebody in the client service centre who may be in the process of obtaining a statement from the reporter.

It can be preliminarily concluded that personal description in the investigation of armed robberies deals specifically with the identification of perpetrators. This is done through information obtained by investigating officers or a police official who received a statement or spoke to a source of information/possible victim, i.e. those who witnessed the incident who reported the matter to the police.

2.3 COMPONENTS OF PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

Personal description of suspects can for all practical purposes be divided into two main components. These components are *general information* and the *physical description* of the suspect (Sefanyetso, 2009:81). The components can serve as an important guideline to the investigators or other members when obtaining a full description of an armed robbery suspect. It is worth noting that any police official who may come into contact with the victim, the complainant or the witness should comprehend what the components of personal description are.

The research participants were asked: 'What are the components of personal description?' The following responses were recorded:

- Five participants (participants numbers 1, 3, 4, 5&6) stated that the names, nicknames and surnames should be obtained as well as the full description of the address of the suspect.
- Participant number 8 mentioned that *"the components of personal description include the biographical details of the suspect and his or her physical appearance, which may be obtained from the family and friends of the suspects"*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 2, 9 & 11) mentioned that the components of personal description include the physical description, name and address of the suspect.
- One participant (participant number 7) mentioned that *"clothing, earrings and hairstyle can be regarded as components of personal description"*.
- Two participants (participants numbers 10 & 12) mentioned the following — participant 10 said that *"the components of personal description include physical appearance of the suspect and his or her personal details"*. And the other participant stated that *"the components of personal description are physical description and his or her estimated age"*.

The answers of the research participants were compared with each other.

Six of the 12 participants (participants numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7) did not mention the two components of personal description by name. These six participants mentioned only examples of one component of personal description, namely general information. One of the 12 participants (participant number 8) regarded '*biographical details*' and '*physical appearance*' as components of personal description, while two of the 12 participants (participants numbers 10 & 12) regarded '*physical appearance*' and '*personal details*' as components of personal description. In practice, physical appearance and personal details respectively fall under the general information and physical description components.

Three of the 12 participants (participants numbers 2, 9 & 11) mentioned one component of personal description, namely 'physical description' and only two examples of the other component. In practice, most of the time, investigators and patrol officers focus on the examples of general information to obtain the identity of a suspect. Sefanyetso (2009:81) states that personal description includes not only the physical appearance of the offender, but also general information from which the background can be understood. It is, however, evident that there are two components of personal description.

Referring indirectly only to one component of personal description, Osterburg and Ward (2010:165) state that the victim or eyewitness can make a major contribution by providing a good description of the perpetrator. It should be noted that these authors indirectly refer to the physical description component. It is important to remember that the identity of a suspect is not always known, but seemingly that is not a problem. This is confirmed by Stelfox (2009:160) who states that even where victims and witnesses do not know the identity of an offender, they are often able to give investigators information about some characteristic such as a tattoo, an item of clothing, a type of vehicle they were using, or even their accent or the words they used that can sometimes assist investigators identify suspects.

The word 'identity' is based on the general information component, while the word 'physical characteristic' are based on the physical description component. These authors indirectly mentioned these two components of personal description. When comparing the responses of the participants and the views of the authors, dissimilarities and similarities were discovered. For instance, literature and three participants mentioned the two components of personal description.

In addition, Osterburg and Ward (2010:165) and one participant (participant number 7) mentioned from whom the description of the physical appearance of the suspect can be obtained, such as “*eyewitnesses, family and friends of the suspect*”. The main difference can be seen, as the participants did not mention the phrase: ‘...from which the background can be understood’.

The author gives more detail by also mentioning the aim of general information. The background information can assist the investigators to start looking at specific places for the suspects. Taking the answers of the participants and the views of the authors into account, it can be preliminarily concluded that the components of personal description deal with the identity and general information obtained about the suspect from the witnesses, victims, family and friends.

2.3.1 General Information

General information has to do with all information that the police and the complainant already have about the whereabouts of the suspect. As confirmed in Stelfox (2009:160), the general information about a suspect is a vitally important component of personal description, as it can shed more light on the type of person the police are on the lookout for. Usually, general information about a suspect can only be obtained when the suspect is known to the complainant, victim or witness. In addition, the family members, friends of the suspect and government institutions, such as hospitals and the Department of Labour to mention a few, can provide vital general information to the police about a suspect.

Non-government organisations (NGO’s), such as churches and social clubs, can also provide general information about the suspect. If a suspect is a known criminal with an existing criminal record, the criminal’s general information can be obtained from the Case Administration System (CAS) of the South African Police Service (SAPS). The question, “What is general information about the suspect?” was posed to all research participants, and their answers are as follows:

- One participant (participant number 2) mentioned that “*the general information has to do with the biographical details of the suspect who is still at large. It may include the name, surname, alias, age, date of birth and address of the suspect who is still at large*”.

- One participant (participant number 5) mentioned that *“the general information is some sort of Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the suspect, arrested or not arrested as yet. It can be obtained from the witness, victim, complainant and other people. Even the suspect him/herself can also after his or her arrest provide the police with general information”*.
- One participant (participant number 9) mentioned that *“the general information has to do with all the details pertaining to the suspect’s whereabouts, his or her friends or work address of his girlfriend/her boyfriend if he or she is not married. Even the suspect’s contact details can form part of his or her general information”*.
- One participant (participant number 12) mentioned that *“the general information of a suspect is a profile of a suspect, which includes the following information: ethnic/population group (black, white, coloured, Indian), gender (male or female), identification number, date of birth, name, surname, alias, place of birth and language preference”*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 3 & 4) mentioned that general information is all the information available about the suspect.
- Two participants (participants numbers 6 & 11) mentioned the following — participant 6 said *“general information is only the information that the complainant, victim and witness can provide about the suspect”*. And the other participant stated *“Sometimes only a nickname is known to the complainant, victim and witness. That is sometimes the only general information known about the suspect”*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 7, 8 & 10) mentioned that general information is not specific information about a suspect, but is information generally known to the complainant, victim and witness.

Three participants (participants numbers 2, 5 & 12) respectively referred to general information of a suspect as some sort of CV, profile and biographical details of a suspect. In practice, these key terms contain the personal details of a person. In practice, the CV information of the suspect is not necessarily known to the complainant, victim and witness, but if the suspect was previously arrested, his or her general information will already be on the police records.

In other words, there will be an existing database of the suspect. This information was previously not necessarily obtained from the complainant, victim or witness, but was obtained from the suspect him/herself at the time when he or she was interviewed or interrogated.

Some of the participants (participants numbers 9 &12) mentioned examples of general information only, while others mentioned the sources of information from whom the general information can be obtained. According to Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:29), a fugitive's occupation, associates, friends, relatives, habits and hobbies are often significant factors in the police hunt. Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:29) continue to submit that a person's occupation or profession is often a form of habituation. It should be mentioned that these two aspects of general information can only be of great assistance if a suspect of an armed robbery is employed. Swanson, Chamelin, Territo and Taylor (2012:128) agree with Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:29) when stating that the investigation should reveal as much personal background information on the suspect as can be obtained.

Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:128) continue to submit that this information should include aliases, a social security number, date and place of birth, education, marital status, employment history, financial history and current circumstances, prior offences, past and present physical and mental health, any drug or alcohol abuse or addiction, relationship to the victim or crime scene, and possible motive, biases and prejudices. Although a hobby or favourite activity may not always yield required assistance in tracing the suspect, it can still be utilised for these purposes. For instance, Osterburg and Ward (2014:122) explain that sometimes a hobby or favourite activity can help to locate a suspect who, for example, follows the horses from track to track, loves deep sea fishing or frequents pornography shops.

It is worth mentioning that we should know at what stage of the investigation should information about the general information of the friends and family of the armed robbery suspect be obtained. In shedding light on that, Lyman (2013:50) mentions that the tasks required of a follow-up investigation include the gathering of information from friends and associates of the suspects. However, it is evident that information gathering about or from the friends and associates of the suspect does not take place during the preliminary phase of an armed robbery investigation, but during follow-up investigations.

The answers of the participants cannot be regarded as sufficient enough in determining what is meant by general information about the suspect. That is why literature that has bearing on general information was also consulted with the aim of making comparisons. The comparisons brought some differences and similarities to the fore. For instance, Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:128) and two participants (participants numbers 2 &12) mentioned the specific date of birth, addresses and alias as aspects of general information. In differentiating the research participants responses and literature, it can be seen that while literature provided specifics regarding the general information, the responses of the participants were broader. Two participants (participants numbers 6 &11) mentioned that *“sometimes only a nickname is known to the victim, complainant and witness”*.

This could have far reaching consequences because if the investigating official accepts what is said by these sources of information, and without doing extensive enquiries or neighbourhood canvassing, the maximum information will not be obtained. No progress will be made regarding the general information about the suspect. The description of race and clothing is also an important facet of identifying the armed robbery suspects. The ethnic/racial group and gender of the suspect are instrumental for investigators in reducing the pool of the suspects that they are looking for. For instance, they can only focus on a particular ethnic/race group and a particular gender group instead of everyone.

Viewed in the light of the answers of the participants and the views of the authors, it may be interpreted that certain aspects of general information can only occasionally help to locate an armed robbery suspect during follow-up investigations undertaken by investigating officials with the assistance of several sources of information. It is also established that general information can assist the investigators because if it is obtained correctly, it can reduce the number of people who could potentially be the suspects in a particular armed robbery case. For instance, the gender and race/ethnicity of the suspect re-focus the search for the suspects.

2.3.2 Physical Description

Physical description is the description that the complainant provided about the face, voice and body of the suspect. The dictionary describes physical description as what you see with the naked eye.

It encompasses anything you can describe about a person or group of people, just on sight (Your Dictionary, 2018: np). Physical description, which is the second component of personal description, is equally important as the general information of the suspect. Even if the general information of the suspect is known to the complainant, victim and witness, a physical description is still to be obtained from these sources to enable the police to arrest the correct suspect.

In practice, the investigating officials only make use of this component when a suspect is a total stranger to the complainant, victim and witness. In other words, this component is only used as a so-called plan B or as a second option to assist in the identification of the suspect. In addition, this component can serve as an important back-up to the known general information of the suspect. The research participants were interviewed with the aim of determining what personal description entails. The following answers were tendered:

- Three participants (participants numbers 4, 5 & 6) mentioned that physical description has to do with the physical appearance of the suspect observed by the complainant, victim, witness and other people. It can also include the tone of voice of the suspect.
- Two participants (participants numbers 1 & 3) mentioned the following — participant number 1 said *“physical description of a suspect has to do with the outward description of the physical appearance of the suspect”*. And the other participant stated *“physical description is the description what the complainant, witness and victim give about the suspect. The complainant, victim, witness and bystanders can play an extremely important role in this regard”*.
- One participant (participant number 2) mentioned that *“physical description can be regarded as the description of the suspect at the time he or she approached the victim, complainant and witness. A description of his or her face, ears, eyes, nose, moustache (if applicable) and clothing that he or she was wearing at the time of the robbery. The police vehicles can be dispatched to be on the lookout for the suspect matching the description.”*
- Two participants (participants numbers 7 & 10) mentioned the following — participant number 7 said *“physical description is to describe the physical build of the suspect in detail”*.

And the other participant (participant number 10) stated *“physical description has to do with the description of the permanent body features of the suspect. Clothing description is not a permanent description of the suspect. A moustache is not a permanent description of a suspect. There is a possibility that a suspect can cut his or her hair and moustache (if applicable) after having committed the crime”*.

- Four participants (participants numbers 8, 9, 11 & 12) mentioned that physical description is a description provided by the complainant, victim and witness about the characteristics of the suspect, for example, the manner in which the suspect walks and talks, and has possible tattoos on his face, hands and arms as well as earrings.

It is evident from foregoing responses that the participants have different views about what physical description as a component of personal description entails. It is evident from their answers that physical description is the description of the physical appearance, which includes the suspect's tone of voice. It is also evident from the answer of one participant that the best opportunity to identify suspects is the time when they approach the victim, witness or complainant. An interesting answer is that of the participants (participants numbers 7 & 10) who emphasised that *“there are permanent and temporary physical descriptions”*. According to these participants, the suspects may change their clothing or cut their hair and moustache after the commission of a crime.

This, therefore means that these aspects are less reliable if used as physical description aimed at identifying the suspect/s. According to Swanson, Chamelin, Territo and Taylor (2012:163), the following points with regard to personal description should be included: sex, race, age, complexion, hair and eye colour, physical defects, scars, marks, tattoos, build and the nature and colour of clothing worn. In addition to that, Lyman (2013:42) states that physical description involves gender, race, age, height, weight, eye colour, hair colour, style or type of hair, length of hair, facial hair, if any, clothing description and other outstanding physical characteristics (for example tattoos and/or scars). Orthmann and Hess (2013:43) add to that list and include the manner in which the suspect walks, which was not mentioned by other authors.

Mainly, these authors focus on the description of the external body parts of the armed robbery suspects as aspects relating to physical description. It is important that we do not lose sight of the value that the different forms of evidence can offer in order to bring an armed robbery suspect to justice and to ensure a conviction.

Osterburg and Ward (2014:8) confirm that evidence may take many forms, including physical evidence such as fingerprints, blood, Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and tool marks, which can link the suspect to the scene. Secondly, evidence may consist of the property found in the possession of the suspect. This kind of evidence is important in complimenting the description provided about the suspect, as physical identification such as tattoos, deformities and other physical descriptors provided by the witnesses may sometimes be unreliable. This, therefore means that the description of the external body parts, as aspects of physical description, of an armed robbery suspect, alone will not guarantee a conviction.

However, physical descriptions and the different forms of evidence are equally important in ensuring a conviction. The information received from the participants and literature was compared. Similarities and differences can be observed. For instance, Orthmann and Hess (2013:43) and four participants (participants numbers 8, 9, 11 & 12) mentioned the manner in which the suspect walks. A difference can be observed, as the participants (participants numbers 1 & 3) mentioned the three sources of information, such as witness, victim and complainant, from which the description of the suspect must be obtained.

The said sources of information are not mentioned by the authors or literature. However, it is important to know where to obtain information about the physical description of the suspect. Without that information no progress will be made in the investigation. There is a main difference that can be seen, as the participants did not mention the value of the different forms of evidence that can lead to a conviction. It is only mentioned by the authors or literature.

On the other hand, there is a contrast with four participants (participants numbers 8, 9, 11 & 12) who mentioned that earrings are part of the physical description of the suspect. In practice, this could be problematic, as the earrings can be easily removed and if the earrings were the only characteristic by which the suspect can be identified, identification would be impossible. The description of race can lead the investigating officials to be on the lookout for a specific race group, which can narrow the field of search to specific individuals.

It can, therefore, be argued that physical description is a description of the permanent physical appearance of the suspect and the non-permanent physical appearance, which includes the description of the clothing that the suspect can remove after he or she committed the crime. The further meaning that can be deduced from the foregoing discussion is that the physical description will need to be coupled with other evidence to prove to the courts that a certain person is indeed the perpetrator of the armed robbery case under investigation.

2.4 PERSONAL DESCRIPTION TECHNIQUES

The researcher consulted two international countries to explore their techniques. The countries referred to in this regard are the United States of America and India. India is using similar personal description techniques. The said country used mugshots not only for suspect identification, but they also used the said technique to identify their residents' cattle (CNN News, 2015). The United States of America is one of the countries in which firearms-related crime is of high prevalence. This is confirmed by Osterburg and Ward (2010:417) who state that robbery affects millions of Americans every year. They are using other techniques such as mugshots that South Africa does not make use of in resolving their armed robbery investigations.

A mugshot is a photograph taken from the suspect by the police for identification and investigating purposes. Mugshot presentations can now be utilised in the field (Osterburg & Ward 2010:18). The researcher is of the view that the South African Police Service can learn from their best practices. Personal description techniques focus on the accuracy of personal description.

In this regard, information from the witness and victim is of paramount importance in ensuring the accuracy of personal description. Without information regarding the physical features or peculiarities of the suspect, it is impossible to identify and trace the suspect. Techniques of personal description refer to the manner in which investigators and their aides go about identifying suspects at the scene (Orthmann & Hess 2013:214). The research participants were asked: 'What do personal description techniques entail?' Their answers are set out below:

- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 2 & 3) mentioned that the photo album of known suspects must be shown to the witnesses, complainants and victim. According to the participants, the photo album should not be shown by the investigating official who investigates the case, but by an investigating official who does not know the merits of the case.
- One participant (participant number 5) mentioned that *“the Local Criminal Record Centre (LCRC) must draw a sketch of the face of the suspect after the victim, witness or complainant has indicated that they will be able to describe the suspect”*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 4, 6 & 7) mentioned that identity parades could be regarded as a technique of personal description. This can assist the investigating official to ensure that the witness, victim and complainant are sure about the identity of the suspect.
- Five participants (participants numbers 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12) mentioned that they usually use photographs of known culprits to indicate or identify the witness, victim and complainant. The techniques of personal description have to do with line-ups, identity parades, photo identifications and criminal photographs retrieved from the National Picture and Image System (NPIS) of the South African Police Service.

The responses of the participants (participants numbers 8, 9, 10, 11&12) suggest that there are three prominent personal description techniques that are often used by investigators of armed robbery cases.

These techniques are identification parades, photo identification parades and the creation of a facial sketch of the suspect by an expert. The participants also indicated that these techniques are mostly used in armed robbery cases. Although the participants may not have mentioned these techniques directly, their reference to the LCRC, the photo albums and harvesting the photographs from other sources meant that the techniques used are as mentioned earlier. According to Palmiotto (2013:32), there are a variety of ways to identify suspects. The author continues to submit that perhaps the most important are eyewitness and photographic identification.

It is evident that the author mentioned only two techniques of identification. Although the author mentioned only two techniques by name, it does not necessarily mean that these techniques are the only existing techniques. There are a number of other techniques as well, which are confirmed by Orthmann and Hess (2013:221), who state that there are several techniques available to identify suspects. However, it is important that investigating officials should be aware of these techniques because they should know how to implement them. Concerning the implementation thereof, this should be done in accordance with the Constitution.

More importantly is the fact that these techniques should be mentioned by name. Therefore, Orthman and Hess (2013:221) state that the suspects can be identified through field or show-up identification, mugshots, photographic identification or line-ups (identification parades). Exactly how and when these techniques are to be employed by investigating officials is mentioned by Osterburg and Ward (2010:201), who state that if there is an eyewitness, an opportunity to scrutinise mugshots must be arranged without delay. Osterburg and Ward (2010:201) continue to argue that if this is unproductive, an image of the offender should be developed by an artist or from a composite image assembled with a facial-feature-kit or created digitally by computer. When an end result is an arrest, additional action might require a line-up to see if a witness can make identification.

It should be mentioned that these authors, however, mentioned three techniques of personal description, namely mugshots, composite images and line-ups (identification parades). The researcher is of the opinion that research rests on two pillars, of which one is the answers of the participants and the other one, the views of the authors. Focussing on both pillars is crucial. Therefore, literature that has bearing on the personal description techniques was also scrutinised in order to establish new ways regarding personal description techniques.

Literature and eight participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 3 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12) referred to photo identification as a technique of personal description. Also, literature and one participant (participant number 5) referred to composite images as “a technique of personal description”. Furthermore, literature and eight participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 3 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12) mentioned identification parades as a technique of personal description.

The main difference between the responses of the participants and literature is that the identification parade is not mentioned readily by the participants. This is understandable perhaps because identification parades only become applicable after an arrest has been effected. The meaning derived from the responses of the participants and literature is that there are various techniques which can be instrumental in identifying the suspects in armed robbery cases.

It is also evident that investigators may use one technique after the other depending on whether such a technique is helpful or not. It is worth noting that some of these techniques, such as an identification parade, may not necessarily be possible before an arrest is effected. This is due to the fact that there will be a need to line up suspects and other people with the intention of ascertaining whether the witness is definitely able to identify the suspects.

2.4.1 Mugshots

Mugshot identification is a technique of identification where law enforcement officials show the photographs previously taken of the people who were arrested (Orthmann & Hess 2013:54). This means that the police will retrieve these photographs from the database and see if the witnesses will be able to confirm whether the person on that image is the one who perpetrated the crime under investigation.

This implies that mugshots can be used only in cases where the specific picture is available on the database. This is an easy technique of identification because the suspect is absent when this technique is used to identify him or her. The victim, witness or complainant does not have to feel intimidated when viewing the mugshots. To the question: 'What is the meaning of mugshots?' the research participants reacted as follows:

- One participant (participant number 2) mentioned that *"mugshots of suspects can be shown to the complainant, witness and victim"*.
- One participant (participant number 4) mentioned that *"mugshots play a very important role in identifying unknown suspects. An unknown suspect is a person only facially known to the complainant, witness and victim, but his or her name, surname and address are unknown to these sources of information"*.

- One participant (participant number 7) mentioned that *“mugshots are only used when the name and surname of the suspect are unknown. When the witness, victim and complainant identify the suspect by means of mugshots, the suspect’s details are already on the database. The correct procedure should be followed”*.
- Two participants (participants numbers 3 & 5) mentioned the following — participant number 3 said *“mugshots can also be used even if the names and surnames of the suspects are known”*. And the other participant stated *“Mugshots can strengthen the identification of the suspect”*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 6, & 8) mentioned that mugshots are very helpful for quick identification. Sometimes the name of the suspect is known, but his or her address is unknown. If the victim, witness and complainant are unable to identify the suspect by means of mugshots, his or her address will automatically be known for tracing purposes.
- Four participants (participants numbers 9, 10, 11 & 12) mentioned that mugshots will be of no use if there is not an existing database for the suspect identified. Mugshots should be linked to an address of the suspect where he or she can be traced.

Although the participants could provide other information regarding the mugshot identification, they did not really provide the definition thereof, nor did they describe how it is used. This is understandable because this technique is not really used in South Africa. This technique is normally used elsewhere in the world for high profile cases or when other techniques proved insignificant because they are too time-consuming. The participants were, however, able to highlight to whom mugshots should be shown. They also highlighted how important mugshots are in identifying unknown suspects. The participants (participants numbers 3 & 5) also mentioned that mugshots can be used to strengthen the case and for quick identification purposes.

In short, mugshots are photographs of unknown suspects that are to be shown to all the various sources of information with the aim of making a positive identification by following the prescribed procedures. According to Orthmann and Hess (2013:221), if the victim or witness does not know the suspect, but saw him or her clearly, mugshots may be used.

It is important to note that mugshots cannot be shown to the various sources of information just for the sake of showing them. A certain condition, which is an important prerequisite, is to be met first before showing mugshots to them. The condition is — There must be a clear indication that there was face-to-face interaction between the suspect and the various sources of information, otherwise mugshots would be a fruitless exercise. According to Palmiotto (2013:267), mugshot imaging has taken the place of mugshots. The new investigative tool of mugshot imaging digitises a picture. Palmiotto (2013:267) continues to submit that the image is stored on a computer to be retrieved at a later stage. The author, however mentioned how the mugshot comes into being.

It should also be noted that showing mugshots can be time-consuming unless the information provided by the various sources of information is of such a nature that it can lead to the shortening of the time-consuming process. In countering such time factor, Orthmann and Hess (2013:221) state that using facial recognition to scan the face of a suspect against a database of thousands of mugshots of known criminals helps officers pare down the list of suspects and/or solve a case.

In addition to this, Osterburg and Ward (2014:222) state that the more specific the information provided by an eyewitness (age, race, sex, hair colour, scar, tattoos, type of crime and weapon, gang emblem on jacket, etc.), the fewer the mugshots will be that need to be printed, thereby keeping viewer saturation to a minimum. When comparing the responses of the participants and literature, there are similarities and differences that can be observed. For instance, Orthmann and Hess (2013:221), and two participants (participants numbers 4 & 7) mentioned that mugshots should be shown when the suspect is only facially known.

The main difference can be seen, as the participants (participants numbers 1 & 12) did not mention how the picture comes into being. On the other hand, there is a contrast with two participants (participants numbers 3 & 5) who mentioned that mugshots can also be used even if the name and surname of the suspect are known. This could cause problems because, in practice, if the name and surname are known to the complainant and witness, these sources will only be asked — How do you know the name of the suspect? They would reply ‘we attended the same school, grew up together or lived in the same area’.

Also, when the name and surname of the suspect are known, the identification is not strengthened by showing mugshots, but is strengthened by written facts with regard to the identity of the suspect. Considering both the answers of the participants and the views of the authors, it can be reasoned that mugshots can be shown to the victim; witness and complainant when the suspect is only facially known for the purpose of quick identification and to strengthen the case after these various sources of information have given specific information. It is also evident that this technique is not used frequently due to the nature thereof.

2.4.2 Photographic Identification

Photographic identification is also a very important technique of personal description. This technique is one of the most popular techniques used by investigating officials. There are many success stories whereby this technique was utilised. This is a convenient technique for both the investigating official and the sources of information because it is easy to conduct.

The victim, complainant and witness do not need to feel intimidated because it is not real human beings who need to be identified, but only photographs. Should the suspect at a later stage be arrested, the victim, witness and complainant will only see him or her in a court of law as a real human being. The research participants were asked: 'What is meant by photographic identification?'. The following results were recorded:

- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 2 & 3) mentioned that photographic identification is whereby you display photographs of possible suspects on a table for identification purposes.
- Two participants (participants numbers 4 & 6) mentioned the following — participant number 4 said *“photographic identification is the identification of the suspect by means of photographs”*. And the other participant stated *“ photographic identification is to show one photograph of the suspect to the witness, victim and the complainant at the same time”*
- Five participants (participants numbers 5, 7, 8, 11 & 12) mentioned that photographic identification is whereby a victim, witness and complainant are given the opportunity to identify the suspect or suspects by means of several photographs.

- One participant (participant number 9) mentioned that *“identification takes place when the complainant is given the opportunity to identify the suspects by means of a photograph of the suspect”*.
- One participant (participant number 5) mentioned that *“photographic identification assists the investigating official with the arresting of the correct suspect. The prescribed procedure should be followed”*.

Five of the 12 participants (participants numbers 5,7,8,11 & 12) mentioned the three sources of information, such as complainant, victim and witness by which the suspect is to be identified, while only one participant (participant number 9) mentioned only one source of information, such as complainant by whom the identification is to be made. Although the aforementioned participant only mentioned the complainant as a source of information, it does not mean that the said participant does not know the other sources of information.

In practice, sometimes the complainant is the only source of information that had a perfect view of the suspect during the commission of the crime. The witnesses did not necessarily see the face of the suspect. All the research participants mentioned the crux of photographic identification, namely photographs that are to be viewed and the suspect to be identified. According to Orthmann and Hess (2013:221), often the victim or witnesses get a good look at the suspect and can make a positive identification. Orthmann and Hess (2013:221) continue to submit *“use photographic identification when you have a good idea of who committed a crime, but the suspect is not in custody or when a fair line-up cannot be conducted. Tell the witnesses they need not identify anyone from the photographs”*.

It should be mentioned that the phrase ‘...when you have a good idea of who committed a crime...’ is in fact the driving force behind holding a photographic identification. In fact, it gives the green light for or permission to proceed with the holding of the photographic identification. An important aspect of photographic identification is the procedure that should not be left out of reckoning. Such procedure is briefly explained by Palmiotto (2013:32), who states that photographs of suspects may be used as evidence provided that a sense of fairness prevails and guidelines are established.

Palmiotto (2013:32) continues to submit that pictures should be shown to only one witness at a time and the investigator should not make any influencing comments. Although the preceding author only mentioned a few aspects of the procedure of photographic identification, it is not 'safe' enough to merely focus on this. Indeed there are more aspects concerning the procedure in terms of the execution of photographic identification. In this regard, Lyman (2013:70) sets out the procedure as follows:

- There should be at least six photographs.
- The photographs should be of people who are reasonably uniform in age, height, weight and general appearance, and the same gender and race.
- The photographs themselves should be similar.
- Mugshots should not be mixed with snapshots, because they are generally recognizable as such and have an immediate tendency to 'implicate' an individual.
- If mugshots or photographs are used, then this information should be covered so that it cannot be seen by the witness.
- The array should not include more than one photograph of the same suspect.
- The photographic array should be shown to only one witness at a time.
- As with show-ups and line-ups, no suggestive statements should be made.
- If possible, the photographic array should be preserved for future reference.

It is worth mentioning that the procedure of how the investigating officers go about holding a photographic identification is always in dispute if an armed robbery suspect was identified in such manner. Importantly, when following the correct procedure pertaining to photographic identification and if the correct suspect was pointed out, this can result in a conviction. When comparing the responses of the participants and literature, differences and similarities can be observed. For instance, Lyman (2013:70) and five participants indirectly mentioned the number of photographs that are to be viewed by the sources of information.

The five participants (participants numbers 5, 7, 8, 11&12) mentioned several photographs, while the authors mentioned a 'series' of photographs.

Also, literature and 11 participants (participants numbers 1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11 & 12) mentioned photograph of the suspect is to be identified. The main difference can be seen, as the participants did not mention the following sentence: The picture should be shown to only one witness at a time and the investigator should not make any influencing comments. By contrast, one participant (participant number 5) mentioned that "*photographic identification assists the investigating official to arrest the correct suspect*". The researcher is of the opinion that photographic identification is aimed solely at the identification of the suspect.

The arrest of the suspect is an activity on its own. The correct suspect can be arrested only after the correct suspect was identified. In light of the answers of the participants and the opinions of the authors, it can be asserted that photographic identification is a legal procedure that is to be video recorded, whereby the various sources of information are afforded with the opportunity to point out a photograph of the suspect of which a description was given amongst several or a series of photographs.

2.4.3 Identification Parades

Identification parades are totally different from photographic identification. The difference is hidden in the fact that during photographic identification, the victim, witness and complainant have to identify a photograph of an unknown suspect amongst other photographs of known suspects. During an identification parade, the victim, complainant and witness are confronted with real human beings standing in a straight line with numbers allocated to each and every one of them. Most of the time, identification parades, are conducted in the exercise yards of police cells or in the exercise yards of court cells. It does not matter where the identification parades are conducted as long as the victim, witness and complainant are comfortable with them.

There is some sort of a risk when conducting identification parades, as it may happen that the suspects exchange the numbers allocated to them with each other, without the investigating official noticing it. This, in effect, can result in the fact that the correct person might be identified, but the incorrect name was written on the identification parade form.

Other international authors call the identification parades with the name “*line-up identification*” (Orthmann & Hess 2013:222). The research participants were asked what the meaning of identification parades is, and they supplied the following answers:

- Three participants (participants numbers 3, 4 & 5) mentioned that identification parades take place whereby the complainant is afforded the opportunity to identify the suspect.
- Four participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 7 & 11) mentioned that identification parades are based on the identification of the suspect by the witness, victim and complainant, by touching the shoulder of the suspect. The whole event should be video recorded.
- Participant number 8 mentioned that “*an identification parade is whereby a suspect is positively identified by the complainant and witness*”.
- Participant number 6 mentioned that “*an identification parade is the identification of a suspect who is part of the identification parade*”.
- Three participants (participants numbers 9, 10 & 12) mentioned that identification parades take place whereby at least eight or more suspects are to stand next to each other to be identified by the witness, victim and complainant. A prescribed form has to be completed containing all the details of the suspects.

The answers of the participants were compared with each other. Three of the 12 participants (participants numbers 3, 4 & 5) mentioned one source of information, such as “*complainant*” during the identification parade. Four of the 12 participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 7 & 11) mentioned three sources of information and how they should go about identifying the suspect. These four participants also mentioned the need to video record the identification parades. These participants further indicated that identification parades deal with real human beings. According to them, the shoulder of the suspect identified must be touched.

One of the 12 participants (participant number 6) mentioned that “*the suspect is part of the identification parade*”. While one of the 12 participants (participant number 8) mentioned “*the positive identification of the suspect*”. Only three participants (participants numbers 9, 10 & 12) mentioned the number of suspects who are to form part of the identification parade.

According to Campbell (2009:76), the identification parade is a police identification procedure in which the suspect is put among a number of persons in order for a witness to point out the suspect. However, it should be noted that the author focuses solely on an identification parade, which includes one suspect standing amongst other persons. The author do not make provision for two and more suspects amongst the other persons. Another important aspect that should not be left out of reckoning is the criminal position of the suspect, for example in custody or not in custody, or prior to holding an identification parade.

Such a status is mentioned by Osterburg and Ward (2010:229) who state that the identification parade is commonly used when the suspect is in custody and there are witnesses to the crime. These authors continue to submit that when a suspect is apprehended and there is an eyewitness to the crime, the appropriate next step is an investigatory line-up (identity parade). Clearly, the position of the suspect prior to holding an identification parade is that he or she must be in custody. It should be mentioned that anything that the investigating official does or follows up in terms of an armed robbery should be done with a specific purpose in mind and the main purpose should be the solving of the crime.

Even the holding of an identification parade has a specific purpose. In defining an identification parade, Nyuswa (2009:124) also includes the purpose of an identification parade, when stating that an identification parade can be seen as the direct personal identification method whereby a number of persons are paraded with the purpose of affording the identifying witness an opportunity to identify a person that he or she saw committing the crime. Clearly, the purpose of an identification parade is to identify a person who committed the crime. The comparison of participants' responses and literature paint an interesting picture about the identification parades.

For instance, Nyuswa (2009:124) and three participants (participants 9, 10 & 12) mentioned the number of suspects forming part of the identification parade. Nyuswa (2009:124), and the 12 participants all mentioned the purpose of an identification parade, namely to identify the suspect. The main difference can be seen, as the participants did not mention the phrase: '...similar looking persons.' The said phrase is only mentioned by the authors or literature.

On the other hand, there is a contrast with three participants (participants numbers 3, 4 & 5) who mentioned that the complainant is given the opportunity to identify the suspect.

In practice, most of the armed robbery cases are not witnessed by the complainant only. Each and every source of information who saw the face of the suspect must attend the identification parade in order to identify the suspect or suspects. It could happen that the complainant made a misidentification, which will result in the fact that the wrong suspect will be convicted.

After having compared the answers of the participants with the opinions of the authors, it is evident that an identification parade is an administrative and practical procedure, which includes the positive identification of an arrested person made by the victim, complainant and witness. This technique of identification is frequently used by investigators. The reasons for this may be that it normally yields positive results and could stand the court challenge if this is properly conducted. It is important to mention that identification parades are conducted by using a specific number of people who are more or less similar. The purpose of this is to ensure that the procedure is fair towards the suspect and those investigators cannot communicate or unduly influence the witnesses or complainants to point out a specific suspect.

2.4.4 Show-ups

Show-ups are another technique of personal description. Show-ups (appear) is to expose or discredit especially by revealing faults (Merriam Webster Dictionary, [s.a]). This is a very effective technique of personal description especially in the case where suspects fled from the crime scene as quickly as possible. If an adequate clothing description can be obtained from the victim, witness and complainant, the information can then be immediately dispatched to other police vehicles for their information and speedy arrest of the suspect. After the suspect has been arrested, he or she can be returned to the crime scene to be identified by the complainant, witness and victim.

Should the suspect not be positively identified, he or she can be released. When he or she is positively identified by these sources of information, the investigator will then proceed with further investigations to collect other evidence that can assist in the investigation of armed robbery cases. When asked what the meaning of show-up in investigation is, the following responses were tendered by the research participants:

- Two participants (participants numbers 6 & 7) mentioned the following- participant number 6 said *“show-ups take place when a suspect is arrested close to the crime scene after a description was provided by the victim, complainant and witness. The suspect should then be returned to the scene to be identified.”* And the other participant stated *“ if the suspect is arrested anywhere else the same day, while the crime scene is still fresh he can be taken back to the crime scene for identification purposes”*
- Five participants (participants numbers 1, 9, 10, 11 &12) mentioned that show-ups take place whereby the complainant gets into the police vehicle to patrol the area so that the complainant can identify the suspect.
- Three participants (participants numbers 2, 4 & 8) mentioned that show-ups take place when a suspect is arrested close to the crime scene or at the crime scene.
- Two participants (participants numbers 3 & 5) mentioned the following — participant 3 said *“show-ups have to do with the arrest of the suspect. The suspect should be returned to the crime scene within a specified timeframe to be identified by the victim, witness and complainant. A statement explaining how the suspect was identified must be filed in the case docket”*. And the other participant stated *“the crucial element of a show-up is not to take the suspect straight to the cells after the arrest, but to take him back to the scene of crime where he can be identified by the complainant.”*

The answers of the participants were compared with each other. Two participants (participants numbers 6 & 7) mentioned where the suspect is to be arrested and what should be done with the suspect after his or her arrest. Also, these two participants mentioned the sources of information that can provide a description of the suspect. Five of the 12 participants (participants numbers 1, 9, 10, 11 &12) mentioned the manner in which the complainant goes about identifying the suspect during a show-up. Three participants (participants numbers 3, 4 & 8) mentioned how far away from the crime scene the suspect can be arrested. According to them, the suspect can even be arrested at the crime scene.

In addition, two participants (participants numbers 3 & 5) mentioned that a statement should be written to indicate exactly how the suspect was identified.

Osterburg and Ward (2010:234) state that when a situation arises in which a proper line-up cannot be arranged quickly, a one-on-one confrontation or show-up may be utilised. They continue to affirm that as an identification procedure, confrontation frequently means that investigators may bring the suspect to the witnesses within a short timeframe. However, this is to be done separately if there is more than one witness. It should be mentioned that the authors regarded a show-up as an option for an identification parade.

In agreeing with Osterburg and Ward, Orthmann and Hess (2013:215) who state that field identification, which refers to show-ups, these must be made within a short time after the crime was committed. These authors continue to submit that the critical element in field identification is time. Identification must occur very soon after the crime was committed (usually 15-20 minutes). It should be mentioned that a show-up can be inadmissible in court with regard to the timeframe. This is confirmed by Palmiotto (2013:33) who states that a show-up after five or six hours may not be admissible. Usually a show-up occurs only at or near the crime scene when the suspect is arrested or apprehended and immediately brought before eyewitnesses or victims for identification.

It should, therefore, be mentioned that a show-up is still admissible in court when it was done within the first four hours after the crime was committed. According to Lyman (2013:71), in a show-up, the witness is confronted with one suspect only. In practice, most of the armed robberies are committed by two or more armed robbers, which mean that show-ups cannot be limited to one suspect only. It should be borne in mind that when carrying out a show-up, there is a certain factor that investigating officials should guard against or be cautious about. Such factor is mentioned by Palmiotto (2013:33) when stating that a show-up presents a single suspect to an eyewitness or victim of a crime.

Palmiotto (2013:33) continues to submit that the investigator has to be concerned with suggestibility. It is worth mentioning that the factor of suggestibility can jeopardise the entire investigation. Exactly how this factor can influence the investigation is mentioned by Lyman (2013:71) when stating that a suggestive identification technique is one that unduly narrows down the victims' and witnesses' options, so that a particular suspect is chosen.

In addition to that, Osterburg and Ward (2014:230) argue that during a confrontation, no comments or suggestions — such as “we found your wallet when we searched him” or “she confessed, but we need your identification too” — are to be made to a witness. When comparing the responses of the participants and literature, there are similarities and differences that can be observed. For instance, Osterburg and Ward (2010:234) Osterburg and Ward (2010:234) and four participants (participants 6, 7, 3 & 5) mentioned that the suspect should be returned to the crime scene to be identified.

In addition, literature and five participants (participants numbers 1, 9, 10, 11&12) mentioned that the suspect is arrested close to the crime scene. The main difference can be seen, as the participants did not mention the phrase: ‘... *very soon after the crime was committed (usually 15-20 minutes)*’. The said phrase is only mentioned in literature. On the other hand, there is a contrast with three participants (participants numbers 2, 4 & 8) who mentioned that the suspect can be arrested at the crime scene as well. In practice, it happens that not all the suspects run away from the crime scene. The complainant or witness then makes the identification while the suspect is still at the crime scene. In practice, this is regarded as the most effective technique to bring the suspect to book.

If the suspect is arrested in such manner, all the other techniques are not needed for further identification purposes. After having compared the answers of the participants with the opinions or views of the authors, it has become evident that a show-up takes place whereby a suspect is described by the witness, victim and complainant. It can only be acceptable if the suspect is arrested a distance away from the crime scene or at the crime scene itself, and should be returned to the crime scene where these sources of information still are to be positively identified by them.

2.5 ARMED ROBBERY INVESTIGATIONS

Armed robberies in the Paarl policing cluster are a spine-chilling experience. The trauma of being in an armed robbery, whether at home on the streets or in the place of work, haunts most people long after the incident has ended. Armed robbery in the Paarl policing cluster is one of the crimes that people fear the most. Therefore, it should be of great concern that most categories of aggravated robbery have been increasing for the past three years in the Paarl policing cluster (SAPS Annual Report, 2017/2018:12).

Armed robberies have to be investigated by skilful and seasoned investigating officials. This research proves that these cases are currently not thoroughly investigated which leads to unsolved cases. Personal description of a suspect is instrumental and plays a fundamental role in almost every crime. This is also applicable to armed robbery investigations. This is confirmed by Sefanyetso (2009:64), who states that in many crimes, especially violent crimes such as robbery, rape and assault, the complainant or victim usually comes into direct contact with the offender.

As a result, it is possible for the victim to describe and identify the offender. In most of the 'modern armed crime scenes', there are no fingerprints left on the crime by armed robbers. They either wear hand gloves or give orders to their victims to hand over the money or item/s to them. This is confirmed by Stelfox (2009:201) who states that offenders are far more likely to assess whether witnesses are present and to take other basic measures to reduce the information profile, such as wearing hand gloves or socks on their hands to reduce the chances of leaving fingerprints. In that instance, the investigating officials are only left with obtaining a personal description of the armed robbery suspect.

Personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases plays a major role in identifying the suspects. It is difficult for investigating officials to solve an armed robbery case without a proper personal description, which includes the physical description and general information of the armed robbery suspect. If all aspects of personal descriptions are met, this can result in the speedy identification and arrest of the suspect. Personal descriptions of suspects form the basis of the investigators' search for the offender. The patrol officers play a significant role at the robbery crime scene.

Usually they are the members who first arrive at the crime scene, after which they must despatch a description of the suspect to other vehicles in the same area for the speedy arrest of the suspect. The research participants were asked what personal description in the investigation of armed robberies is, and they answered as follows:

- Five participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5) stated that it 'personal description' can assist the investigating official to arrest the correct suspect.

- Three participants (participants numbers 10, 11 & 12) mentioned that personal description in the investigation of armed robberies is crucial because it gives the investigating officer an indication to whom he or she must be on the lookout for.
- Participant number 6 mentioned that *“personal description in the investigation of armed robberies is the technique that can solve all armed robbery cases”*.
- Participant number 8 mentioned that *“personal description in the investigation of armed robberies cannot solve the armed robbery case because information supplied by the complainant is not usable to arrest a suspect”*.
- Participant number 9 mentioned that *“personal description in armed robbery cases can lead to the identity of the suspect, only if the information describing the suspect is sufficient enough. Without such information, it is difficult to identify the armed robbery suspect”*.
- Participant number 7 mentioned that *“personal description in the investigation of armed robberies sometimes lead to the identification, tracing and arrest of a suspect”*.

When comparing the answers of the participants with each other, it is, however, evident that the majority of the research participants indicated that personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases can lead to the arrest of the correct suspect. One participant, (participant number 6) however, has a different view that suggests that *“all armed robberies can be solved by means of a personal description”*. This view, however is in contrast with what happens in practice. In practice, not all armed robbery cases are solved in such a manner. The answers of the other three participants (participants numbers 7, 8 & 9) suggest that all the information is unusable to make a positive identification. In practice, not all information is unusable.

On many occasions, in practice, armed robbery suspects were identified and arrested as a result of personal description. According to Osterburg and Ward (2010:422), robbery investigations depend on the ability to reconstruct the event, to develop physical descriptions and, perhaps most importantly, to establish the modus operandi.

According to Sefanyetso (2009:64), evidence provided by the victims and eyewitnesses is regarded as the most valuable information to the investigating officer and can lead to locating and arresting the offender. Sefanyetso (2009:64) continues to submit that description has always been an important part of the identification process. In agreeing with Sefanyetso (2009:64), Stelfox (2009: 201), who state that as a general, but by no means universal rule, those offences where there is contact between victims and offenders will often lead to information about the offender's identity being generated.

Stelfox (2009:201) continues to submit that this could be because the victim already knows the offender or because he or she can at least provide investigators with a description and some contextual information that may enable them to be identified. It is, however, clear that information does not always lead to the identity of the offenders. Personal description in armed robbery investigations is not always easy to obtain from witnesses. This is confirmed by Osterburg and Ward (2010:419), who state that most victims do not make good witnesses because the incident occurs quickly, a high degree of stress is involved, it is often dark (at least in street robberies) and the suspects often wear masks. Facial identification is frequently difficult for these reasons.

Osterburg and Ward (2010:419), continue to submit that a good investigator working carefully can elicit information that may be buried in the victim's subconscious mind. Personal description in the investigation of armed robberies is the key to various other identification techniques. In confirming that, Osterburg and Ward (2010:419) state that police artists, identification kits and computer imaging systems can be used to help create a drawing of the suspect. When comparing the responses of the participants and literature, differences and similarities can be observed. For instance, Osterburg and Ward (2010:419), and one participant (participant number 9) mentioned that "*identification is at times difficult to make*".

The main difference, however can be seen, as two participants (participants numbers 8 & 9) stated that personal description in the investigation of armed robberies cannot solve the armed robbery case because information supplied by the complainant is not usable to arrest a suspect. Usually in practice this unusable information is made useable by making further enquiries in the obtaining of more information regarding the identity of the suspect from the complainant and other witnesses.

In this regard, the importance of flow of information between the investigating official and the other sources of information cannot be emphasised enough.

On the other hand, there is a contrast with one participant (participant number 7) who mentioned *“that sometimes the suspect’s personal description can lead to the identification, tracing and arrest of the suspect”*. The word ‘sometimes’ is an indication that personal description does not always lead to an arrest of the suspect. The answer of the participant is a true reflection of what happens in practice. It can, therefore be preliminarily concluded that personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases can at times lead to the arrest of the armed robber if the unusable information is made useable by following up all information, given by the sources of information.

2.6 SUMMARY

There are various identification techniques that can be used to identify suspects. These techniques are photographic identification, mugshots, identity parades and personal description. Each and every technique has its own unique significance in the investigation of crime. One technique leads to the other. Personal description forms the starting point that can lead, for example, to an identification parade, as the investigating officer does need a personal description of an armed robbery suspect prior to holding the parade. The next chapter deals with the significance in identifying armed robbery suspects.

CHAPTER 3

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL DESCRIPTION IN IDENTIFYING ARMED ROBBERY SUSPECTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Armed robbery suspects in the Paarl policing cluster are often organised. They approach their victims with hand gloves and balaclavas to conceal their identity. Notwithstanding that, witnesses and complainants still provide good personal descriptions of armed robbery suspects (SAPS Annual Report, 2017/2018:12). Personal description of an armed robbery suspect is the compass which steers the investigation in a certain direction. Without the said compass, the robbery investigation will never reach its final destination. The destination includes the arrest, charging, prosecution and hopefully the sentencing of the armed robbery suspect. In addition, without a personal description of an armed robbery suspect, the armed robbery investigation will be undirected.

In other words, the investigation will be without a coherent plan or purpose. The main focus of this chapter is to create an understanding of the significance in identifying armed robbery suspects. Issues, such as the meaning of identification and techniques of identification, will be used to lay a foundation for the main focus of this chapter. In the final analysis, this chapter will provide an explanation on the conclusions regarding the significance of personal description in the identification of armed robbery suspects.

3.2 THE MEANING OF IDENTIFICATION

In the investigation of cases such as armed robbery, identification must be done and be beyond reasonable doubt in order for the court to consider them. Generally speaking, although identification in investigation refers to both the people and objects involved in a particular crime, the focus of this research is exclusive to the suspects in cases of armed robbery. However, it is not the sole responsibility of the investigating official to identify the suspects, but to afford any source of information an opportunity to present information that will assist in creating a personal description of the suspect.

The investigating officials should employ all the techniques and follow the correct procedures when affording these sources of information the opportunity to provide information, which will be used as a personal description. The research participants were asked: 'What is the meaning of identification?'

The following answers were given:

- Five participants (participants numbers 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6) mentioned that identification is everything that can be obtained from the complainant or witness to link the suspect to the crime scene. That is to say, what the suspect looks like. The complainant should identify the arrested person and the objects.
- Two participants (participants numbers 1 & 7) mentioned the following — participant number 1 said *"identification is the identification of suspects beyond reasonable doubt. The facts surrounding the identification should be necessary and trustworthy in a court of law"*. And the other participant stated *"identification is a technique that forms part of any investigation to identify all the suspects involved in a criminal act."*
- Three participants (participants numbers 9, 11 & 12) mentioned that identification is the positive identification of the suspect by the victim, witness and complainant.
- Participant number 8 mentioned that *"identification is a characteristic, for example a scar on the face of the suspect, whereby investigating officials can identify the suspect"*.
- Participant number 10 mentioned that *"identification is the identification of the suspect or something that can be linked to the crime scene"*.

The research participants were of the opinion that identification has to do with both persons and objects. A difference could, however, be seen from the opinion of one participant (participant number 8) who submitted that *"identification is to be conducted by investigating officials"*. The submission of one participant (participant number 8) suggested that identification is not the responsibility of the witness, victim and complainant, which is in contrast to the rest of the participants (participants numbers 9, 11 & 12) who are of the opinion that identification is indeed the responsibility of these sources of information.

In practice, only these sources of information can identify a suspect because they saw how the crime was committed and by whom the crime was committed. When the identification of the suspect is to be made by the investigating official who did not observe the commission of the crime, this can result in a misidentification. Furthermore, this will result in the incorrect suspect being prosecuted. According to Gardner (2005:23), the concept of identification refers merely to the identification of something or someone belonging to a specified class or group. It could be argued that something or someone respectively refers to exhibits or evidence and suspects that can be associated with the crime scene.

In supporting this view, Nyuswa (2009:122) submits that identification concerns the identification of something belonging to a specific category. He continues to submit that through identification, the witnesses, suspects, exhibits and evidence are identified. In a similar view, Coetzee (2008:79) states that identification merely refers to the identification of something. Coetzee (2008:79) continues to submit that identification is a relative concept and is only relevant with regard to the suspect. Throughout the crime scene investigation process, the witnesses, physical evidence and elements of the crime are identified by the investigating officer in an attempt to solve the crime.

It can be argued that identification is not only aimed at the identification of suspects, but also at the identification of various other aspects that can incriminate the suspect. According to Osterburg and Ward (2010:36), identification is a classification scheme whereby similar characteristics are placed into one category and the category is given a name. When comparing the answers of the participants and literature, differences and similarities can be seen. For instance, Nyuswa (2009:122) and participant number 10 mentioned that *"identification is the identification of a suspect"*.

The main difference, however, can be seen as two participants (participants numbers 1 & 7) mentioned that the suspect must be identified beyond reasonable doubt. The said sentence is only mentioned by two of the participants. On the other hand, there is a contrast with five participants (participants numbers 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6) who mentioned the phrase "...identification of an arrested person". The researcher does not fully agree with these five participants because an arrested person is in custody, unless he or she was released on bail and committed the crime while he or she was out on bail.

By implication, the incorrect suspect can be identified and arrested. Such arrested person can be identified by means of an identification parade. A person who has not yet been arrested can also be identified. The said identification can be done by means of photographs and mugshots. It can, therefore be preliminarily concluded that identification includes the identification of an arrested person, or a person not arrested as yet, the crime itself, the various sources of information and physical evidence, which might steer the investigation either in a right or in a wrong direction.

3.2.1 Relevance of personal description in armed robbery investigations

Like in any other crime, personal description also plays a significant role in the investigation of armed robbery cases. In most armed robbery cases, the suspects are not known to the respective sources of information. Therefore, the only manner in which the armed robbery case can be solved is by means of obtaining a personal description of the armed robber. In obtaining such information, the investigating official should not fabricate the facts regarding the personal description of the suspect, but should focus on all the relevant facts of the incident. The research participants were asked: ‘What is the relevance of personal description in armed robbery investigations?’. The following answers were recorded:

- Participant number 1 mentioned that *“personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases that can, at a later stage, lead to the holding of an identification parade”*.
- Two participants (participants numbers 2 & 3) mentioned the following — participant 2 said *“personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases can assist the police in clearing the armed robbery investigation”*. And the other participant stated *“personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is way of focussing and getting the correct suspect as described by the complainant”*
- Three participants (participants numbers 4, 5 & 6) mentioned that personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases can enable the police to make a quick arrest at the crime scene or close to the crime scene.
- Participant number 8 mentioned that *“personal descriptions coupled with a clothing description are of great value when it comes to armed robbery investigations.*

This can eventually result in the name and surname of the suspect. Even if the suspect was wearing a mask and hand gloves, these should be described”.

- Four participants (participants numbers 9, 10, 11 &12) mentioned that personal description is of such relevance that it can at a later stage result in the identity and arrest of the suspect. This ensures that the right suspects are arrested, which could lead to successful prosecution. This could also lead to the recovery of the stolen property. All these factors can also contribute towards client satisfaction.
- Participant number 7 mentioned that *“personal description in armed robbery investigations is a necessity, but does not necessarily lead to an arrest”.*

The research participants were of the opinion that personal description has a positive impact towards resolving an armed robbery. A difference, however could be seen from one participant (participant number 8) who submitted that *“personal description coupled with a clothing description can result in the identity of the suspect”*. The submission of one participant (participant number 8) suggests that personal description can only result in the identity of the armed robbery suspect if it is coupled with a clothing description, which is in contrast with the rest of the participants who are of the opinion that personal description itself can result in the identity of the armed robbery suspect.

In practice, personal description does not necessarily have to be coupled with a clothing description in order to result in the identity of the suspect. Furthermore, in practice, personal description can result in an identification of the suspect with or without a clothing description. According to Osterburg and Ward (2010:417), armed robbery investigations employ all elements involved in criminal investigation, namely people (victims and witnesses), method (modus operandi), physical evidence, crime analysis and records. It is a confrontational crime, thereby placing the victim in position to be an eyewitness even if the suspect is disguised. In their checklist for robbery investigations, Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:203) highlight the following aspects regarding the description of the suspect:

- Assume the suspect is present and an arrest is made;
- Ascertain whether the suspect has left the scene and, if so, how and obtain descriptions of the suspect and any vehicle; and

- Provide a description of the suspect to the despatcher.

These authors, however, highlight the relevance of personal description of a suspect in armed robbery investigations. Osterburg and Ward (2010:419) state that the investigator should be aware that facial identification, while important, is not the only source of information. They continue to submit that clothing, physical marks (e.g. limp), type of weapon and words (i.e. 'language') used by the perpetrator to convey that the robbery is intended can be invaluable. It is evident from the opinions/views of these authors that additional information about an armed robbery suspect is also of great relevance and importance in armed robbery investigations.

The additional information strengthens the facial identification of the suspect in armed robbery investigations. It should be mentioned that armed robberies have a negative impact on witnesses and victims, and, as a result, can influence the type of description given about the suspect. This is confirmed by Orthmann and Hess (2013:398) who state that a robbery usually leaves victims and witnesses feeling vulnerable and fearful making it difficult for them to give accurate descriptions and details of what occurred. It should be mentioned that although the victims and witnesses cannot provide accurate descriptions, this does not necessarily mean that it is irrelevant in armed robbery investigations.

The accurate description might come at a later stage, which is why Orthmann and Hess (2013:398) continue to submit: "Be patient". When comparing the answers of the participants and the opinions of the authors, similarities and differences can be seen. For instance, Osterburg and Ward (2010:419) and one participant (participant number 8) mentioned how valuable physical description and a clothing description are in armed robbery investigations. The main difference, however, can be seen, as only one of the research participants (participant number 1) mentioned that *"the relevance of personal description in armed robbery investigations is that it can lead to the holding of an identification parade"*.

On the other hand, there is a contrast with one participant (participant number 7) who mentioned that *"personal description in armed robbery investigations is a necessity, but does not necessarily lead to an arrest"*.

It should be mentioned that the personal description can lead to the arrest if the victim immediately reports the incident to the police. If the police react swiftly enough, the armed robber can be arrested as soon as possible. Should the suspect not be arrested, the personal description can enable the police to make use of other identification techniques.

It could, therefore, be preliminarily concluded that personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is of such relevance that it can lead to the despatching of the description of the armed robbery suspect, the employing of various identification techniques and the swift arrest of the suspect, depending on how quick the witness or victim reports it to the despatcher.

3.2.2 Techniques of identification

Identification techniques enable police officials to identify the suspects. The positive identification and detection of persons who have committed a crime are an important requirement for successful investigation and are also valuable as evidence in court. The investigator must, therefore, be thoroughly familiar with the different identification techniques that can be used to positively identify a criminal (Berning 2008:53). Usually, these techniques of identification are used when the suspects are total strangers or unknown to the witness, victim or complainant. It is, therefore, imperative that investigating officials should make optimal use of these identification techniques. When asked to describe the different techniques of identification, the participants' responses were recorded as follows:

- Participant number 10 mentioned that *“the suspects can be identified by means of personal description, fingerprints and Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)”*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 2, 3 & 4) mentioned that the suspect can be identified only by means fingerprints and a personal description or sketches drawn by police artists (i.e. identikits).
- Five participants (participants numbers 5, 6, 7, 11&12) mentioned that the suspect can be identified by means identification parades and fingerprints.

- Two participants (participants numbers 1 & 8) mentioned the following — participant 1 said *“the suspect can be identified by means of incidental identification, composites, voice or through modus operandi and fingerprints”*. And the other participant stated *“the most general ways to identify a suspect is by his face and by means of fingerprints”*.
- Participant number 9 made reference to the statement that *“the suspect can be identified by means of saliva, fingerprints, DNA and blood”*.

The answers provided by the research participants indicated that identification techniques include personal description and modus operandi. There is a difference with one participant (participant number 10) who submitted that *“DNA is a technique of identification”*, which is not incorrect. The submission of the participant, however suggests that DNA is the only existing identification technique, of which it is in contrast with the majority of the research participants who mentioned various other identification techniques. DNA can certainly be regarded as an identification technique. In practice, DNA is not always found on armed robbery crime scenes, in particular.

It, however depends on the nature of the armed robbery, If, for example, the suspect injured him/herself in such a manner that blood splashes or any other biological fluids, such as the suspect’s saliva, were found at the armed robbery crime scene, only then will DNA samples be available. Although the crux of this research is to measure the significance of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases, it is also prudent to superficially look at other references made in literature and by the participants as far as the techniques of identification are concerned. The techniques mentioned by the participants are similar to what was listed by Berning (2008:62) as the techniques of identification.

In addition to this, according to Sefanyetso (2009:79), suspects may be identified by means of field or show-up identification, photographs, by conducting an identification parade through the suspect’s voice, ears or modus operandi and the use of fingerprints. The author referred to five identification techniques. However, it should be mentioned that these are not the only existing techniques. In adding to the aforementioned list, Orthmann and Hess (2013:216) mention that suspects are identified through other means.

These means include information provided by victims, witnesses and other people who are likely to know about the suspect, physical evidence left at the crime scene, psychological profiling, information in police files, information in the files of other agents and informers. When comparing the responses of the participants and literature, similarities and differences can be observed. For instance, Sefanyetso (2009:79), and nine participants mentioned fingerprints as a technique of identification. The main difference, however, can be seen, as literature did not mention the phrase: '*... the suspect can be identified by means of saliva, DNA and blood*'. The said phrase was only mentioned by the research participants (participants numbers 9 & 10).

On the other hand, there is a contrast with three participants (participants numbers 2, 3 & 4) who mentioned that the suspect can only be identified by means of fingerprints and a personal description of the suspect. This could be problematic because if no fingerprints are left on the crime scene by the suspect and if the various sources of information cannot furnish the investigating officials with descriptive information of the suspect, the investigation will immediately cease at the preliminarily phase.

Due to the fact that these three research participants (participants numbers 2, 3 & 4) restrict themselves by focussing only on the two identification techniques, there would be no prospect of a positive identification of the armed robbery suspect. When all eight techniques of identification are used, the likelihood of a positive identification will increase immensely. It could, therefore be preliminarily concluded that the various identification techniques are to be simultaneously considered as an aide to the armed robbery investigation in order to arrive at the identity of the armed robbery suspect.

3.3 IDENTIFYING ARMED ROBBERY SUSPECTS BY MEANS OF PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

In most armed robbery investigations, the suspects are not always known to the complainant, witness and victim by name. However, there are instances whereby armed robbery suspects are indeed known by name, but this is in the minority. The reason for this is that the armed robbery suspects focus on victims to whom their identity is totally unknown. When the suspect is known by name, this could result in the quick arrest of the suspect.

However, when the suspect is not known by name, it does not necessarily mean that the investigating officials should stop or give up on the armed robbery investigation. It is in this instance that personal description is likely to offer an important alternative to investigating officials that could also result in the identification of the armed robbery suspects. In an endeavour to establish what the significance of personal description of an armed robbery suspect is, the question was posed to the research participants, and the responses were recorded as follows:

- Six participants (participants numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6) mentioned that an accurate personal description, in most instances, enables the witness, victim and complainant to positively identify the armed robbery suspect. They then said that the main significance of this is that the description will reduce the pool of suspects.
- Participant number 7 submitted that *“an accurate description can lead to a positive identification of the perpetrator”*.
- Three participants (participants numbers 8, 9 & 10) mentioned that it is fundamental towards the apprehension of the armed robbery perpetrators.
- Participant number 11 alluded to the fact that *“a personal description of an armed robbery suspect can assist in linking the suspect to the crime in court”*.
- Participant number 12 mentioned that *“if the witness, victim or complainants are able to identify the suspect through personal description, and this can improve the chances of conviction in the court of law”*.

Since the research participants mentioned various significances of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases, the research then collated these responses with the intention of probing them further and in a comprehensive manner. The researcher further looked at literature and solicited these significances so that a list of these could be generated. According to Stelfox (2009:201), as a general, but by no means universal rule, those offences where there is contact between victims and offenders will often lead to information about the offender's identity being generated.

Stelfox (2009:201) continues to submit that this could be due to the fact that the victim already knows the offender or because he/she can at least provide investigators with a description and some contextual information that may enable them to be identified. It is, however, evident that an identity can be generated after the commission of the contact crime. It should be mentioned that the identity of the suspect cannot only be generated, but that there is also another method that can lead to the identity of the suspect.

This is confirmed by Osterburg and Ward (2010:7) who argue that if the identity of the perpetrator must be developed, the effort required is far greater and, for certain crimes, often unsuccessful. It is evident from these authors that an identity of a suspect can be respectively developed and generated after a personal description of the suspect was provided. This is confirmed by Orthmann and Hess (2013:399) who state that all information and physical descriptions must be re-checked and to have a sketch of the suspect prepared and circulated.

Clearly, the information should first be re-checked and a sketch must be prepared and circulated. It should be mentioned that the circulation of the sketch prepared could lead to the positive identification of the suspect. When taking both the responses of the research participants and literature into consideration, a list can be generated. This list is the one that was used to preliminarily conclude that there are generally five significances of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases. These significances, which will be discussed individually below in this section, reduce the pool of suspects, identification of suspects, apprehension of suspects, linking of suspects to the case and the improvement of chances of conviction in a court of law.

3.3.1 Reducing the pool of armed robbery suspects

The account of research participants and literature is that personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is of such significance that it can even reduce the pool of suspects. If a personal description of the suspect was not obtained, any person could actually be regarded as a possible armed robbery suspect. This significance came to the fore when the question regarding the significances was posed to the research participants. The following were the responses when this specific significance was probed further:

- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 3 & 7) exemplified this by stating that the description of a scar on the face of the suspect that was provided by the victim, witness and complainant enables the investigating officers to be specifically on the lookout for a suspect with a scar on his/her face.
- Three participants (participants numbers 2, 4 & 5) mentioned that a scar on the face of a suspect, a visible tattoo on the body of a suspect and earring in the ear of the suspect, provided by the witness, victim and complainant, assist the investigating official and other police members to reduce the pool of suspects.
- Two participants (participants numbers 8 & 11) mentioned the following — participant 8 said *“when the victim, witness and complainant provide a clothing description of the suspect and the description of the vehicle, this can reduce the pool of suspects”*. And the other participant stated *“the voice of the suspect can reduce the pool of suspects”*
- Four participants (participants numbers 6, 9, 10 & 12) mentioned that a description of a face of the suspect and other outstanding or unique body features, which may include a scar, can reduce the pool of suspects.

The answers provided by this research indicated that a detailed and specific description of the suspect's face, tattoos, scar, ear, nose, lips and hair colour can reduce the pool of suspects. This makes sense because these are the features that are unique and may not be similar amongst a large number of people. This may, in effect, mean that even the position of the scar itself or the nature of the tattoo can be used to eliminate any other person who does not possess such features from the long list of suspects. In practice, not all suspects have scars on their faces. This is also the case of tattoos, which may even be differentiated by the feature which is specifically drawn.

According to Osterburg and Ward (2010:425), by a process of elimination, it may be possible to narrow the range of suspects considerably. They continue to submit that in departments that use a computerised record system, it may be possible to initiate ‘blind’ searches. Some of the variables that can reduce a list of suspects include sex, race, age (although this can be deceiving), specific descriptors, clothing (particularly hats or jackets), type of weapon, geographic location, type of vehicle used and the number of suspects involved.

This partial list of variables provides an indication of the ways in which a potential list of suspects can be developed and reduced (Osterburg & Ward 2010:425). It is evident from the opinions or views of these authors that the reducing of the pool of suspects is chiefly based on the personal description of the suspect. It should be mentioned that a list containing many potential suspects can be reduced, depending on the specific information provided by the various sources of information.

This is confirmed by Orthmann and Hess (2013:286) who state that if the suspect is unknown, identity becomes a priority. They continue to state that often several suspects are identified and eventually eliminated as and when information and evidence are obtained, and the list is reduced to one or two suspects. It should be mentioned that reducing the pool of suspects is based solely on unknown suspects. This is confirmed by Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:106) who state that in cases of unknown identity, the objective is to develop suspects by following the basic investigative leads with the goal of identifying the perpetrator.

They continue to conclude that the action is oriented to expanding the universe of suspects to identifying prime suspects. Clearly, the universe of suspects is reduced to the identifying of prime suspects from whom the suspect or suspects can be arrested. The entire process starts with developing the suspect's specific profile. When comparing the answers of the research participants and the opinions or views of the authors, differences and similarities can be seen. For instance, Osterburg and Ward (2010:425), and three participants (participants numbers 2, 4, & 5) mentioned that "*tattoos can reduce the pool of suspects*".

The main difference, however, can be seen, as only the research participants mentioned the three sources of information, which are the complainant, victim and witness. On the other hand, there is a contrast with two participants (participants numbers 8 & 11) who mentioned that a description of the clothing worn by the suspect can reduce the pool of suspects. The answer of this participant can, by implication, be interpreted that a clothing description of a suspect alone is sufficient evidence to reduce the pool of suspects.

This could be problematic because once the suspect removes his/her clothing, the sources of information would never be able to identify them. A clothing description alone will never reduce the pool of suspects, especially when the suspects were not arrested on the same day.

It could, therefore, be preliminarily concluded that a personal description provided by the various sources of information about a tattoo, scar, colour of the hair and a total facial description in combination with a clothing description of an armed robbery suspect can assist investigating officers and other operational police officials to reduce the pool of suspects.

3.3.2 Identification of armed robbery suspects

Personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is also of such significance that it can lead to the identification of armed robbery suspects. It is, therefore, imperative that investigating officials should know what to do in terms of getting the armed robbery suspect identified. The investigating official should endeavour to get the full co-operation of the various sources of information. The research participants were asked: 'How can personal description lead to the identification of armed robbery suspects?' They answered as follows:

- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 2 & 3) mentioned that a personal description of the suspect, provided by an informer, can lead to the identity of the suspect. After the information has been received from the informer, it should be properly followed up by investigating officials.
- Six participants (participants numbers 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 11) mentioned that when a suspect is described by the witness, the victim and the complainant, the investigating officials must follow up all information and communicate it with other police officials with the aim of identifying the suspects.
- Participant number 9 mentioned that *"personal description provided by other police officers/officials, the complainant, victim, witnesses and informers can be despatched to all police vehicles within that specific police station's precinct to be on the lookout for the suspect. If the suspect is arrested, an identification can be made"*.
- Participant number 10 mentioned that *"a personal description provided by the various sources of information is sometimes, but not always vague and insufficient and, therefore, an identification can still be made if specific questions are asked during the interview with the various sources of information"*.

- Participant number 12 mentioned “*a personal description cannot result in identification because the descriptions provided are too vague*”.

The research participants (participants numbers 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 11) were of the opinion that when the information provided by the various sources of information is followed up by the investigating officials and other police members, it can result in the identification of the suspect. On the other hand, there is a difference with one participant (participant number 12) who is of the opinion that “*a personal description cannot result in identification because the descriptions provided are too vague*”. The submission of the research participant (participant number 12), suggests that the descriptions provided by these sources of information are at all times too vague in nature, which is in contrast with two participants (participants numbers 10 & 11) who stated that the descriptions are sometimes, but not always vague and insufficient in nature and, therefore, an identification can still be made.

In practice, when specific questions are asked and the required answers are given, identification can still be achieved. According to Orthmann and Hess (2013:182), a witness is a person who saw a crime or some part of it being committed. Good eyewitnesses are often the best source of information in criminal investigation. Record the information a witness gives, including any details that can identify and locate a suspect or place the suspect at the crime scene. In addition to that, Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:56) state that additional information should be recorded to describe the suspect or suspects from aliases (the designation a.k.a. ‘also known as’, is used to indicate aliases) and nicknames to physical oddities and dress code, including any data on employment or school attended.

It should be mentioned that by experience, these types of additional information can result in the identification of the armed robbery suspect. It is worth noting that the armed robbery investigation does not cease once the armed robber has been identified, but that there should be a continuation of effort still to be devoted to the investigation. This is confirmed by Orthmann and Hess (2013:236) who state that once the suspect has been located and identified, the next step is generally to arrest the suspect. It is, therefore, the preliminary conclusion of this research that the personal description, which is accurate and well led by the questions from the investigating officers, has the potential of revealing the identity of the suspect.

3.3.3 Apprehension of armed robbery suspects

According to Ngwenya (2012:44), does successful crime investigation not only mean the identification of the offender, but also the tracing of the offender. The tracing of fugitives depends a great deal on the expertise with which sources of information are exploited for adequate and meaningful information about the wanted person. Although the crime and its circumstances provide the basic information about the suspect as a person, there are also available avenues to a diligent investigator in the records of criminal justice agencies, credit reports, telephone records, employment histories and public records (Luschbaugh & Weston 2010:25).

If the suspect was positively identified after a personal description was obtained, the suspect can then be arrested. According to Orthmann and Hess (2013:236), an arrest is regarded as the taking of a person into custody in the manner authorised by law for the purpose of presenting the person before a magistrate to answer for the commission of a crime. This significance was confirmed during the interview of the research participants who submitted that:

- Participants numbers 1 & 2 stated that by sharing or the transmission of description information about the personal description and clothing of the suspect can lead to the apprehension of the suspect.
- Participant number 2 stated *“armed robbery cases are very serious offences. It is therefore very important to first thoroughly investigate before arrest. Make first absolutely sure of the identity of the suspect by means of statements and other identification techniques which include personal description”*.
- Participants numbers 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 & 11 states that a detailed description must first be obtained from the complainant and eyewitness, if any, about the face, speech and clothing of the suspect and thereafter the patrol vehicles can patrol the area with the aim of apprehending the suspects.

- Participants numbers 6, 7, 10 & 12 mentioned that the description of the suspect and the vehicle can lead to the arrest of a suspect, especially when running away from the crime scene and only once the police reacted swiftly enough.

In general, research participants numbers 1 & 2 were of the opinion that personal description can lead to the apprehension of the armed robbery suspect only after a detailed description was obtained from the complainant and eyewitness. Although there were some differences in the submissions of these participants, these did not negate the possibility of an arrest emanating from a positive identification of a suspect through personal description. Over and above that, this significance also came to the fore when perusing literature. According to Orthmann and Hess (2013:17), if the suspect just left the scene, immediate action is required.

These authors continue to submit that if information is provided early enough, other units enroute to the scene may make an arrest. Some cases require that the suspect be developed, located, identified and arrested. Others begin with an arrest and proceed to identification. No set sequence exists. Regardless of how an arrest begins or ends an investigation, the arrest must be legal (Orthmann & Hess 2013:214). According to Osterburg and Ward (2010:124), to some degree an eyewitness or victim may be able to describe the perpetrator to the police. This description can then be transmitted in three ways to law enforcement personnel (or the public at large), for assistance in apprehending the offender.

Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:24) state that an arrest brings the investigation into close focus. Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:24) continue to submit that identifying characteristics that make a person or vehicle different from other persons or vehicles are the basis for success in the apprehension of suspects. It is evident that the phrase ‘... that make a person different...’ can be interpreted by implication as beyond reasonable doubt.

It is also worthwhile to mention that linking the armed robber to the victim and crime is an integral aspect in armed robbery investigations and the subsequent apprehension of the suspect. It is also clarified in literature that there are other advantages if the suspect is apprehended.

For instance, there is a possibility to look for extra clues from the suspect once he/she is arrested and this could possibly include trace material that may be present on the suspect's clothing that will link him or her to the victim or to the crime scene (Osterburg & Ward 2010:424). These authors mentioned that the different linkages to the crime scene and victim can be made after the identification and apprehension have been made. Usually in practice, this is made to strengthen the case against the armed robber, and is discussed further below.

3.3.4 Linking of armed robbery suspects to the case in court

The research data sources have also submitted that personal description can be useful in linking suspects to a case in court. The identification of an individual as the person accused of the crime leads to an array of witnesses and evidence. This evidence structure is sometimes supported by the pre-trial statement made by the accused person and is oriented towards proving the identity of the person responsible for the crime in the alleged indictment or information (Luschbaugh & Weston 2012:310). Linking a suspect to a case in court is an important aspect of criminal investigation. When the case docket is finally sent to court, there must be prima facie evidence against the suspect.

Igram (2012:25) defines prima facie evidence as "evidence that will establish a fact or sustain a judgement unless contradictory evidence is produced". The prima facie evidence should reveal the identity of the suspect by means of a personal description. This significance was revealed by research participants when specific probing questions were posed to them and the following responses were recorded:

- Five participants (participants numbers 1, 3, 4, 6 & 8) mentioned that the suspect must be pointed out by the complainant, witness and victim on the crime scene, whether the suspect is still on the crime scene and that they should testify in court that they pointed out the suspect on the scene because they had seen him or her committing the alleged offence.
- Participant number 2 mentioned that *"the victim and witness should be given a 'point out note', upon which the case details and the contact details of the investigating officer appear."*

Once they see the suspect, they should immediately contact the investigating officer. The victim and witness must testify in court that the suspect who robbed them is the suspect before court”.

- Two participants (participants numbers 5 & 7) mentioned the following — participant 5 said *“the suspect must be pointed out by the victim or complainant by means of identification and/or a photo identification parade, and they should testify about the circumstances under which the suspect was identified”*. And the other participant stated *“the suspect can be linked to a case in court by means of personal description and scientific investigation methods as a backup”*.
- Participant number 9 mentioned that *“the witness and complainant must, during their testimony in court, reflect on the personal description of the suspect that they provided to the police. Certain factors, such as lighting, play a significant role in the identity of the suspect”*.
- Participant number 10 mentioned that *“the identity of the suspect first starts with a personal description. The witness and complainant should link the suspect to the crime scene and the crime by means of witness statements. Thereafter, they must be able to testify in court about the personal description given to the police”*.
- Two participants (participants numbers 11 & 12) mentioned the following — participant number 11 said *“in most instances the eyewitnesses have eye-to-eye contact with the armed robbers and as a result of that, they can link the suspect to the court case by testifying that they looked him or her in the face and that they will never forget the face”*. And the other participant stated *“only the witnesses and the investigating official can link a suspect to a court case and even the items robbed that was identified by the complainant in possession of the armed robbery suspect”*.

There is no doubt that the research participants (participants numbers 11 & 12) were of the opinion that personal description can link the suspect to the case in court when the complainant, witness and victim pointed out the suspect while on the crime scene, and that they should testify in court that they pointed out the suspect on the crime scene according to something specific.

This means that the identification of the suspect, through the personal description, does not end during the investigation. Although the personal description and identification of the suspect would be contained in the witnesses' statements, the complainant, victim or witness must also be in a position to testify in court.

According to Osterburg and Ward (2010:444-445), all too often there is a tendency to couple an eyewitness identification with a prior record as a basis for prosecution. Osterburg and Ward (2010:444-445) continue to submit that such evidence, though valuable, should be combined with thorough investigation that endeavours to tie the suspect to the crime scene to link him or her to the crime, to link him or her to the victim and to counter any defence contentions of mistaken identity. These authors emphasise the nature of the investigation that can lead to the different linkages regarding the suspect. The importance of these linkages cannot be emphasised enough.

This is confirmed by Van der Merwe (2008:78), who states that linkages of suspects to victims are most important and common types of linkages accomplished by physical evidence and personal descriptions in criminal investigation. Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:203) list the grounds for attacking the credibility of identification evidence as follows:

- Suggestive use of photographs;
- Failure to safeguard the rights of the accused in placing a suspect or an arrestee in a police line-up (identification parade);
- Conflict between the physical description given by witnesses and the actual appearance of the defendant in court;
- Conflict between the weapon described by witnesses or "constructively described" by the nature of injuries inflicted on the victim and the weapon presented in court as the robbery weapon; and
- Conflict between the vehicles, if any, involved in the robbery.

It should be mentioned that all the necessary information regarding the personal description must have been legally obtained including the identification evidence when the case is presented in court. In practice, armed robbery suspects in armed robbery cases flee from the crime scene immediately. However, a suspect can be arrested away from the crime scene and be returned to where the identification can be made. It can, therefore, be preliminarily concluded that a suspect identified by means of a personal description can be linked to a case in court by means of testimonial evidence. If the personal description stands the conflict-test in court, the suspect can be found guilty as charged. The testimonial evidence should relate to the information contained in the written statements given to the police regarding the personal description of the suspect.

3.3.5 Improving the chances of conviction of the armed robbery suspect

Personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is also of such significance that it can even increase the chances of conviction of the suspect in the court of law. It is, however, very important that investigating officials should gather information regarding the personal description of a suspect in a manner that meets the requirements of the law. If the information regarding the personal description of the suspect was not legally obtained, the suspect can be acquitted. This significance is evident in the following responses of the participants:

- Three participants (participants numbers 1, 3 & 4) mentioned that personal description can support the conviction of the suspect if the external factors made it possible for the complainant and witness to provide a description of the suspect.
- Participant number 2 mentioned that *“personal description cannot necessarily support the conviction of the suspect, as they could have made a mistake with the identification of the suspect due to distance and insufficient lighting”*.
- Participant number 5 mentioned that *“personal description can support the conviction of the suspect if the victim, witness and complainant had a perfect view of the face of the suspect during the commission of the crime. The court takes several factors into account, such as how far the suspect was from the complainant and the lighting”*.

- Five participants (participants numbers 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11) mentioned that personal description can remove all doubt and that it can enhance the conviction of the suspect.
- Two participants (participants numbers 9 & 12) mentioned the following — participant 9 said *“when there is doubt when it comes to personal description, the benefit of the doubt must go to the suspect, which will result in the suspect being acquitted”*. And the other participant stated *“an accurate personal description of the armed robbery suspect and proper witness testimony can improve and enhance the chances of a conviction”*

The research participants (participants numbers 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11) were of the opinion that personal description can remove all doubt and can enhance the conviction of the suspect depending on some of the factors, such as the lighting and the proximity of the witness to the suspect. The doubt in the testimony of the witnesses is often removed by evidence which confirms that there was face-to-face contact between the suspect and the complainant at the time when the armed robbery was committed. The witnesses must then testify according to what they have stated in their statements.

However, it should be noted that it is not an absolute necessity that there must have been eye-to-eye interaction between the complainant and suspect to support the conviction. In practice, a conviction can be supported or secured even when there was no eye-to-eye interaction between the suspect and the various sources of information as long as these sources are able to provide a personal description of the suspect and this is seen as admissible and truthful by the court of law. Literature confirms that a good personal description can enhance the chances of conviction in the court of law (Luschbaugh & Weston 2012:202).

According to Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:202-203), even in robberies in which the victim is killed or unable to see the robber's face, identification can be made by general physical build, fingerprints, type of disguise, recovery of loot, means of escape (automobile licence, model or year, if an automobile is used) and type of weapon used as well as through the personal description provided by the bystanders or eyewitness. Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:202-203) continue to submit that a sufficiently compelling combination of these factors will convince a court or jury of the identity of the robber.

These authors, however, continue to submit that facial characteristics, fingerprints or an automobile licence may be sufficiently persuasive without additional factors. Seemingly, forensic evidence is not always a necessity when giving evidence about the identity of the suspect in court. In confirming that, Osterburg and Ward (2010:235) state that in the absence of forensic evidence, the two most compelling kinds of evidence presented to the court are the signed confession and identification of the accused by an eyewitness.

It should be mentioned that in supporting the conviction of the suspect, the role that investigators can play in this regard should not be underestimated. In mentioning the said role, Orthmann and Hess (2013:11) state that investigators systematically seek to identify the individual who committed a crime, locate the individual and obtain sufficient evidence to prove in court that the suspect is guilty beyond reasonable doubt. Since the court scrutinises the evidence presented before it, eyewitness identification is subjected to various factors that investigating officers have to take into consideration when interviewing eyewitnesses regarding the personal description or identity of the suspect.

These factors are mentioned by Orthmann and Hess (2013:400), who state that eyewitness identification is affected by many factors such as the distance between the witness and the suspect at the time of the robbery, the time of day and lighting conditions, the amount of violence involved, whether the witness had ever seen or knew the suspect and the time it took for the crime to be committed. Armed robbery suspects cannot be charged just for the sake of charging them. A thorough investigation should be conducted prior to charging the suspect.

This is confirmed by Luschbaugh and Weston (2012:198), who state that to substantiate charging a suspect with robbery, the investigation must uncover legally significant evidence that a crime was committed, that this crime was robbery and that it is the accused person who committed it. Although there are these considerations, the meaning derived from both the research participants and the literature are conclusive that personal description is one of the factors that can strongly improve the chances of conviction of an armed robbery suspect in a court of law.

3.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher has examined the different techniques of identification of armed robbery suspects. The said techniques were discussed and provided some insight on the terms identification, modus operandi, fingerprint investigation, surveillance photography and informers. All these techniques have one common goal, which is the identification of the armed robbery suspect. These identification techniques give the investigating officials the necessary hope to make a positive breakthrough towards identifying armed robbery suspects. Furthermore, these identification techniques form the building blocks towards the significance of personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects.

Maximum use should be made of these building blocks by investigating officers in their endeavours to reach the identity of the suspect. Criminal investigation is aimed at resolving crime. In this regard, identification is crucial. Furthermore, identification paves the way towards solving the armed robbery cases. Identification of a suspect is actually the heartbeat of any criminal investigation. It keeps the investigation alive until the suspect is located, arrested and sent to court. Without a personal description, the armed robbery investigation is usually closed down as undetected. Eventually, it will be filed in the archives as a so-called 'red docket'.

A red docket is a police term that implies that the suspect is untraceable due to a lack of identification indicators or factors. It is, therefore, imperative that investigating officials should keep their finger on the pulse of the armed robbery investigation by collecting as much descriptive information about the suspect as possible. The next chapter focuses on the findings and recommendations of this research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Any research conducted should arrive at its findings and recommendations. In the researcher's opinion, the findings and recommendations are the final product of the research conducted. In achieving such a product, this research was driven by its aim, which is to discover the significance of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases. However, two research questions were asked during the research. These questions are inter alia:

- Firstly, what is personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases?
- Secondly, what is significant about personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects?

The information acquired during this research was by means of personal interviews with participants and by means of national and international sources.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following are the findings which are related to the research objectives:

4.2.1 Research Objective One

The first objective of this research was to review the significance of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases in the Paarl policing cluster. To answer the first research objective, a specific question was asked to the research participants. This question is as follows:

4.2.1.1 What is personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases?

It has been established that personal description in the investigation of armed robberies deals with the identification of those who perpetrated this crime through the information obtained by investigating officers or a police official who obtained the statement or spoke to one of the sources of information from the people who may have been victimised, who witnessed the incident or those who have reported the matter to the police.

The research participants have some knowledge about what personal description entails by referring to what the important role that the sources of information can fulfil during the process of describing an armed suspect.

- It has been established that the components of personal description deal with the identity and the general information obtained about the suspect from the witnesses, victims, family and friends.
- The research participants were unable to name the two respective components of personal description. They were only given examples of the components of personal descriptions.
- Certain aspects of general information can only occasionally help to locate an armed robbery suspect during follow-up investigations undertaken by investigating officials with the assistance of several sources of information. It is also established that general information can assist the investigators because if it is obtained correctly, it can reduce the number of people who could potentially be the suspects in a particular armed robbery case. For instance, the gender and race of the suspect can be used to re-focus the search for the suspects.
- The research participants do not know all aspects of general information.
- Physical description is a description of the permanent physical appearance of the suspect and the non-permanent physical appearance, which includes the description of the clothing that the suspect can remove after he or she committed the crime. The further meaning that can be deduced from the foregoing discussion is that the physical description will need to be coupled with other evidence to prove to the courts that a certain person is indeed the perpetrator or suspect of the armed robbery case under investigation.
- The research participants differentiated between permanent physical description, such as the body of the suspect and non-permanent physical description such as the clothing worn by the suspect during the commission of the armed robbery.
- The rest of the research participants know what physical description entails.
- There are various techniques which can be instrumental in identifying the suspects in armed robbery cases.

- It is also evident that investigators may use one technique after the other depending on whether such a technique is helpful or not. It is worth noting that some of these techniques, such as an identification parade, may not necessarily be possible before an arrest is effected. This is due to the fact that there will be a need to line up suspects and other people with the intention of ascertaining whether the witnesses are certainly able to identify the suspects.
- The research participants were only able to mention identification parades, photo identification parades and the creation of a facial sketch of the suspect by an expert.
- Mugshots can be shown to the victim; witness and complainant when the suspect is only facially known for quick identification purposes and to strengthen the case after these various sources of information have given specific information.
- Mugshots are not frequently used due to their nature.
- The research participants did not really provide the definition of mugshots or describe how they are used.
- Photographic identification is a legal procedure that is to be video recorded, whereby the various sources of information are afforded with the opportunity to point out a photograph of the suspect of which a description was given amongst several or a series of photographs.
- The research participants know what photographic identification entails and knows how to implement it.
- An identification parade is a procedure in which a number of similar looking persons, including the suspect, are shown simultaneously or sequentially to a witness, who may be able to identify one of them as the perpetrator.
- An identification parade is an administrative and practical procedure, which includes the positive identification made by the victim, complainant and witness of an arrested person. This technique is frequently used by investigators.
- The research participants know how to conduct an identification parade.
- When a situation arises in which a proper line-up cannot be arranged quickly, a one-on-one confrontation or show-up may be utilised.
- A show-up takes place whereby a suspect is described by the witness, victim and complainant.

- It can only be acceptable if the suspect is arrested a distance away from the crime scene or at the crime scene itself, and should be returned to the crime scene where these sources of information still exist, to be identified by them.
- The research participants know what show-ups are all about.
- Identification refers to the identification of something or someone belonging to a specified class or group.
- Identification includes the identification of an arrested person or a person not arrested as yet, the crime itself, the various sources of information and physical evidence, which might steer the investigation either in a right or in a wrong direction.
- The research participants were of the opinion that identification has to do with both objects and persons.
- The research participants do not know all the techniques of identification.
- There are more than eight techniques of identification.
- Personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases is of such relevance that it can lead to the despatching of the description of the armed robbery suspect, the employing of various identification techniques and the swift arrest of the suspect, depending on how quick the witness or victim report it to the despatcher.
- The research participants mentioned that personal description can lead to the identification of the suspect.

4.2.2 Research Objective Two

The second research objective was to explore the value of identifying armed robbery suspects. Data was obtained by interviewing the research participants by asking the following question stipulated under research question two.

4.2.2.1 What is significant about personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects?

- There are generally five significances of personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases. These significances, which will be discussed individually later in this section, reduce the pool of suspects, identification of suspects, apprehension of suspects, linking of suspects to the case and the improvement of chances of conviction in a court of law.

- A personal description provided by the various sources of information about a tattoo, scar, colour of the hair and a total facial description in combination with a clothing description of an armed robbery suspect can assist investigating officers and other operational police officials to reduce the pool of suspects.
- The research participants stated that a detailed and specific description of the face, tattoos, scar, ear, nose, lips and hair colour can reduce the pool of suspects.
- Personal description, which is accurate and well led by the questions from the investigating officers, has the potential of revealing the identity of the suspect.
- The research participants stated that the descriptions provided by the witness, complainant or the victims are at all times too vague and insufficient in nature.
- These authors mentioned that the different linkages to the crime scene and victim can be made after the identification and apprehension have been made. Usually in practice, this is made to strengthen the case against the armed robber, and is discussed further below.
- The research participants were of the opinion that personal description can lead to the apprehension of the armed robbery suspect only after a detailed description was obtained from the complainant and witness.
- A suspect identified by means of a personal description can be linked to a case in court by means of testimonial evidence. If the personal description stands the conflict-test in court, the suspect can be found guilty as charged. The testimonial evidence should relate to the information contained in the written statements given to the police regarding the personal description of the suspect.
- The participants were of the opinion that personal description can link the suspect to the case in court when the complainant, witness and victim pointed out the suspect while on the crime scene by something specific.
- Although there are these considerations, the meaning derived from both the research participants and the literature are conclusive that personal description is one of the factors that can strongly improve the chances of conviction of an armed robbery suspect in the court of law.
- The research participants were of the opinion that personal description can remove all doubt and enhance the conviction of the suspect depending on some of the factors such as lighting and the proximity of the witness to the suspect.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are hereby made with regard to the research questions:

4.3.1 Research Objective One

4.3.1.1 What is personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases?

- Both the uniform branch members and the investigating officials must acquire detailed information about the components of personal description in order to obtain maximum information about the armed robbery suspects.
- There must be co-operation between the uniform branch members and the investigating officials to obtain as much information about the general information about the suspect as possible. In this regard, CAS function 5.13.6 can be very fruitful.
- Investigating officials and uniform branch members should interview the complainant, witness and victims of armed robbery cases more than once in order to obtain maximum information about the physical description of the armed robber.
- Investigating officials and uniform branch members must know what personal description entails in order to know how to obtain such information of the armed robber from the victim, witness or complainant.
- Members should study the term mugshots and its procedure in order to apply it in every armed robbery investigation.
- Whenever the complainant, witness or victim can provide a sufficient personal description that can lead to the identification of the armed robber, a photographic identification parade must be held.
- Investigating officials and uniform branch members should know the procedure of an identification parade and how many people including the suspect should be part of the identification parade.
- Investigating officials must utilise this technique when the complainant, witness and/or victim give a clear indication that they will definitely be able to positively identify the armed robber. Investigating officials should never unduly influence the victim, witness or complainant to make a specific identification.

- Uniform branch members who are usually first on the crime scene should whenever the complainant witness or victim provide them with a clothing description of the suspect despatched the information to other patrol vehicles to effect a quick arrest.
- Identification is a very important aspect of any criminal investigation. Therefore, investigating officials should endeavour to obtain information with regard to the identity of the armed robber, especially when the name and surname of the suspect are unknown.
- Members have to know all the techniques of identification in order to broaden their investigation, and to trace the suspect and to bring them before court.
- Witnesses, complainants and victims should be asked more specific questions with regard to the identity of the armed robbery suspect. It should be recorded in their statements for quick identification purposes.

4.3.2 Research Objective Two

4.3.2.1 What is significant about personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects?

- Investigating officials should, at all times, strive to obtain a personal description of the unknown suspect in order to make use of the identification techniques.
- Investigating officials should ask specific questions such as if the armed robber has a scar and a description of the scar as well as visible tattoos and the nature thereof.
- Investigating officials must, at all times, ensure that the correct suspect is positively identified by the witness, victim or complainant.
- Investigating officials should maintain the correct procedure when effecting an arrest after a positive identification was made. They should never infringe the constitutionally protected rights of the suspects.
- The investigating officials must, at all times, be willing and available to testify in court to link the suspect to their court case.
- Investigating officials should endeavour to testify in court in such a manner that the identity of the suspect, which was obtained by means of a personal description, can be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The research questions have been discussed. Various aspects have, concerning these questions, been discussed during this research project. It came to the fore that not all investigating officials know some of these aspects such as mugshots, as it is a relatively new concept. If the concept is applied, it will enhance the quality and effectiveness of armed robbery investigations. Investigating officials must familiarise themselves with the investigating of armed robbery cases.

Although armed robbery is a serious offence, the principles of investigation are also applicable in these kinds of crime. If all the shortcomings are addressed, armed robbery investigations can result in more court driven cases. More research needs to be conducted with regard to the apprehension of a suspect after a personal description was obtained from the armed robber.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL DESCRIPTION IN THE INVESTIGATION OF ARMED ROBBERY CASES

1. Respondent number:
2. Gender:
3. How old are you?
4. What are your tertiary qualifications?
5. What is your current position?
6. What is the name of your employer?
7. How many years of forensic investigation experience do you have?
8. Have you undergone any training in the investigation of crime?
9. Which types of training courses have you attended in this regard?
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10. Which types of investigations do you specialise in?
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11. How many armed robbery cases have you investigated in the past 12 months?
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12. What is personal description in the investigation of armed robbery cases?

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13. What are the components of personal description?

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14. What is General Information regarding the suspect?

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15. What does physical description about a suspect entail?

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16. What does personal description entail?

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17. What is the meaning of mugshots?

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18. What is meant by photographic identification?

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19. What does an identification parade entail?

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20. How would you define a show-up?

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21. What is the meaning of identification?

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22. Techniques of identification

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23. What is the relevance of personal description in armed robbery investigations?

Research Question 2

24. What is significant about personal description in identifying armed robbery suspects?

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25. How can personal description reduce the pool of armed robbery suspects?

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26. How can personal description lead to the identification of the armed robbery suspect?

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27. How can personal description lead to the apprehension of the armed robbery suspects?

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28. How can personal description link the armed robbery suspect to the case in court?

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29. How can personal description improve the chances of conviction of the armed robbery suspect?

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SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

Proses/Prosa Bag X34

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**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COMPONENT
HEAD OFFICE
PRETORIA**

**Capt Abel Swartz
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

RE: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SAPS: SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL DESCRIPTION IN IDENTIFYING ARMED ROBBERY SUSPECTS: MASTERS DEGREE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA: RESEARCHER: A SWARTZ

- 1 Your research proposal under the above mentioned topic refers.
- 2 Your research proposal was perused and approved according to **National Instruction 1 of 2006 (Research in the SA Police Service)**.
- 3 The conditions mentioned in paragraph 6 of the **National Instruction 1 of 2006** is applicable during the conducting of the study.
- 4 Once the study is finalized a copy of the final research report should be donated to the SAPS

With kind regards,


**LIEUTENANT COLONEL
/HEAD: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT
G J JOUBERT**

Date: 2013-01-07

